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A DISSERTATION

ON

SUICIDE.

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A DISSERTATION ON SUICIDE.

PART I.

Preliminary Obſervations.

IT is ſometimes the fate of a good Cauſe, to ſuffer prejudice from the intemperate Zeal of its Advocates. Although perſuaded of its rectitude, they may be tempted to conſult their Indolence, in ſubſtituting for Argument a declamatory and metaphorical Language; and may be carried into a warmth of Zeal, to cover the Defect. But the vigilant Inquirer after truth will be apt to ſuſpect a deficiency in the Merits of the Cauſe: if theſe be ſufficient to convince the Underſtanding, he will aſk, Why this profuſion of oratorical Art?

Many of thoſe who have maintained the Criminality of Suicide, have indulged an Intemperance of Zeal, a Bitterneſs of Expreſſion, which

are ill ſuited both to the Teacher and the Inveſtigator of moral Science; and which tend to caſt unfavourable ſuſpicions, as well upon the Reaſoning as upon the Reaſoner. It is time that we ceaſe to injure our Cauſe by an injudicious Defence of it. Were it only that we wiſhed to impel men to their duty by influencing their Paſſions, we ought to be cautious of Acrimony in our Language: much more, if we wiſh to lead them into the right path by the free exerciſe of their own Diſcernment.

There is a ſingular impropriety in uſing a Severity of Addreſs to the perſons whom we would retain from the commiſſion of Suicide. The ſtate of mind in which this crime is *uſually* committed, requires all the Gentleneſs of treatment that is conſiſtent with an open and full repreſentation of the Truth. Wherefore all unneceſſary Harſhneſs is to be ſtudiouſly avoided, as tending in a peculiar manner to defeat our principal purpoſe.

We may remark a kind of Concluſion, (not uncommon in moral diſquiſitions,) which might often be juſt, if Man were perfectly *conſiſtent* in his actions; but which, from the known Inconſiſtency, Frailty, and Variableneſs of human agency, muſt be rejected. The nature of it is this; that becauſe a perſon is guilty of one Vice, he would be guilty of any other, if urged to it.

For

For example, it is ſaid that he who is guilty of Falſhood would not ſcruple to perpetrate any crime towards which he might be impelled.

Now, there is certainly that connexion, in Principle, between the tranſgreſſion of Duty in one action and another, that, if we were to reaſon upon mere Theory, we might frequently adopt this kind of Concluſion. But conſult Experience. You will find it difficult to mention a Vice which has not been committed by men whoſe general Characters have been indiſputably good, or a Virtue which has not been practiſed by perſons infected with a number of Vices.

With reſpect, then, to the Inſtances of Suicide which are ſaid to have been committed by men of Integrity and Virtue, we are not ſolicitous to deny the Fact. There is no abſolute neceſſity of concluding, from the commiſſion of one Crime, that theſe perſons did not merit the Reputation of Virtue which they acquired: nor, if we allow that men of virtuous character have finiſhed their lives by Suicide, will it follow that the Action is innocent.

Cato is repreſented by Hiſtorians as a man of ſtrict Integrity, and regular in the practice of many other Virtues. But if we would form a Compariſon between him and a perſon who, in the preſent age, is the intentional cauſe of his own death, we ought to argue in ſome ſuch manner as the following. Cato lived at a time when

Suicide, *in certain caſes*, was by many accounted laudable. To form a due Judgment of the nature of Suicide, he muſt have ſurmounted difficulties greater than we can be aware of, without ſome reflexion: and ſtill greater perhaps would have been thoſe which muſt have obſtructed him in acting up to that Judgment. In matters of mere *Speculation*, to form a Judgment (deliberately and upon good grounds) different from the commonly received Opinions, is conſidered as arguing a Firmneſs above the vulgar mind. But in points immediately relative to *Action*, although ſuch a Judgment were completely formed, there would yet be required a conſtancy of reſolution, to reduce it to Practice.

Nothing of this Extenuation can be pleaded, in favour of one who aſſumes a right over his own life, in the preſent Age. Since the days of Cato, the World has had the experience of eighteen hundred years, to evince the pernicious Effects, and, conſequently, the Guilt, of Suicide. During this period, the Subject has employed the thoughts and pens of many; and the invention of Printing has increaſed the Communication of ſentiments in an immenſe proportion. And, in fact, the Sentiments of Mankind, on this particular point, have undergone a great Change. Notwithſtanding the Frequency of Suicide, it evidently meets with the general Diſapprobation. He therefore who, in this more enlightened age,

may

may give himſelf a mortal wound, imagining that he *imitates* Cato, is not unlike the perſon that ſhould throw himſelf from a precipice, *in imitation* of a benighted traveller, to whom, for want of light, it had beed fatal.

It is not our intention to maintain, that Suicide was univerſally approved by the Ancients. Its warmeſt Patrons amongſt them intirely diſapproved it *in ſome caſes:* and Seneca (the great Panegyriſt of Suicide) allows that there were perſons, ranking themſelves amongſt the Learned, who held the Action to be unlawful†. But we are deſirous to offer ſome Apology for the ſmallneſs of the advantage which we can hope to derive from the ancient Authors, in the Cauſe which we have undertaken. We would ſpeak with the diffidence which becomes us, yet with a firmneſs which becomes a perſuaſion of the truth, in declaring openly that the Practice and Opinions of Antiquity do not in reality afford us that degree of ſupport, which ſome modern Writers, apparently with more zeal than judgment, have attempted to derive from them.

Plato and Ariſtotle are introduced, as Champions, to combat the practice of Suicide. Two paſſages, in particular, are quoted from each. To have intirely overlooked theſe Authorities, might

† "Invenies etiam profeſſos ſapientiam, qui vim affe-
" rendam vitæ ſuæ negent, et nefas judicent ipſum inte-
" remptorem ſui fieri." Ep. 70.

might have been conſtrued as Inattention to our Subject: but Candour obliges us to confeſs, that they ſeem not to bear ſo ſtrong an Interpretation in our favour as has been put upon them by ſome who have quoted, tranſlated, or commented upon them. It were fruitleſs, however, to engage in a diffuſe controverſy of criticiſm with any modern Writer, (with whom at the ſame time we are agreed as to the criminal nature of Suicide) for the mere purpoſe of ſhewing that the paſſages quoted, though containing *ſomething* in our favour, are *leſs* forcible and concluſive than they have been repreſented. But the Streſs which has been laid upon them rendered it neceſſary that we ſhould apologiſe for truſting our Cauſe to the weapons of Argument and Reaſon, rather than to the names, however reſpectable, of ancient Authors who have but briefly, or incidentally, treated the Subject †.

Cicero

† One of the paſſages is taken from the famous Phædo of Plato, (Plat. Op. Edit. Serrani, Tom. 1. p. 62.); ὁ μὲν δὴ ἐν ἀποῤῥήτοις λεγόμενος, &c: or, the ſcope of the paſſage may be better ſeen by taking the context ſo far back as (p. 61.) Ταῦτα δὲ ὦ Κέβης Εὐηνῷ φράζε, &c. It is well known that Cato is ſaid to have read this dialogue, of the Phædo, before he put an end to his life. The ſame is ſaid of the philoſopher Cleombrotus of Epirus. Cic. Tuſc. 1. 34. — The other paſſage of Plato is in his treatiſe de Legibus, Lib. 9. (Ut ſupra, Tom. 3. p. 873.); τὸν δὲ δὴ πάντων οἰκειότατον, &c. — One of the paſſages produced from Ariſtotle, is in his Ethic. ad Nicom. Lib. 3. Cap. 7. (Edit. Hanov. 1610.) *in fine*; Τὸ δ' ἀποθνήσκειν, &c. Theſe words

Cicero likewiſe has been referred to, as condemning Suicide. And, undoubtedly, there are paſſages in his treatiſe de Senectute * and the Somnium Scipionis, which, taken alone, might ſeem intended to condemn it even univerſally. But, if we conſult his other works, we ſhall find Exceptions at leaſt, if not Contradictions, to thoſe general aſſertions †.

The

words indeed directly condemn the Cowardice of flying from the Ills of life. But this was condemned alſo by the Stoics, the avowed patrons of Suicide. Even Seneca ſays (Ep. 58. ſub. fin.) "Imbecillus eſt et ignavus, qui propter dolorem moritur." — The remaining paſſage from Ariſtotle, is, without doubt, immediately to our purpoſe; more eſpecially as mentioning a *Puniſhment* of Suicide. It is Ibid. Lib. 5. Cap. 11. (i.e. ult.); from Πότερον δὲ ἐνδέχεται (which in the above Edit. is the beginning of the Chapter) to theſe words, ὡς τὴν πόλιν ἀδικοῦντι. He repreſents the Self-murderer as doing an Injury to the State; and ſays, Therefore the State puniſhes him, and ſome Diſgrace is fixed upon him. But the Obſervation is confined to a *ſingle* Injury conſequent from Suicide, — the Injury to the *State*. Neither does Ariſtotle mention that this cuſtom of the puniſhment was *every where* received; as Grotius ſeems to have underſtood him, de Jure B. et P. Lib. 2. Cap. 19. Par. 5. 1. Nor yet does he ſubjoin *Reaſons* why Suicide is injurious to the State: although one might be led to think that he did, by Bp. Taylor's manner of expreſſing himſelf in quoting this paſſage, in his Duct. Dub. B. 3. Ch. 2. Rule 3.; where he ſays, "from "whoſe ſervice and profit they ſubtract themſelves," &c.

* "Vetatque Pythagoras," &c.

† See the caſe of Cato excepted by Cicero in his Tuſc. Diſp. 1. 30. See alſo Ib. 5. 40, 41.; and De Fin. 1. 15 & 19.; Ib. 3. 18. And ſee ſome Obſervations relative to Cicero's idea of Suicide, in the Theory of Religion by Dr. Law, Bp. of Carliſle; in a Note, p. 111, 112. 3d. Edit. 1755.

The Prejudice which a Cauſe muſt receive from ſo injudicious a reliance upon theſe Authorities, is evident from this conſideration: He who examines the Queſtion with a ſincere deſire of diſcovering on which ſide the Truth lies, will conſult (if he is qualified) the Originals to which the Writers on the Subject refer him. When he finds paſſages inattentively quoted, imperfectly tranſlated, paraphraſed and commented upon without ſufficient regard to the Context or Deſign of the Author; is he merely where he was at ſetting out, — at the ſame diſtance from the Solution of the Queſtion? No; he is thrown back in his Inquiry. Where he diſcovers the Foundation to be ſo bad, he may ſuſpect that a good one could not be found to build upon.

With regard to the Puniſhments inflicted upon Suicide by the Ancients, the Particular which ſeems beſt to deſerve our notice (beſides what has already been mentioned from Ariſtotle,) is the Athenian † law which appointed that the Hand which had done the deed ſhould be cut off and buried apart from the reſt of the Body*. The Puniſhment of the Mileſian Virgins ‡, and that inflicted by Tarquinius Priſcus ‖ on the Plebeians

† Æſchin. in Cteſiph. §. 22. ſecundùm Taylor.

* More may be ſeen concerning the Grecian Burials, in caſes of Suicide, in Pot. Antiq. B. 4. Ch. 1.

‡ Aul. Gell. Lib. 15. Cap. 10.

‖ Plin. Nat. Hiſt. Lib. 36. Cap. 15.

beians who killed themſelves rather than carry on a very laborious work in which he employed them, were probably temporary; the one made to prevent the deſertion of a public work, and the other to ſtop an unaccountable phrenzy.

The Roman Civil Law appointed Confiſcation of Property in one caſe of Suicide. It had become a cuſtom with perſons, likely to be condemned for any crime of which Confiſcation was the legal puniſhment, to have recourſe to Suicide for preventing the Condemnation: by which means they preſerved the Property to their Families. It was therefore enacted †, that if a perſon accuſed of ſuch a crime killed himſelf through fear of the impending proſecution, his Property ſhould be confiſcated. The object of the law was not to prevent Suicide as a Crime, but to prevent one particular Effect of it, the depriving the imperial Treaſury of a Criminal's Property. How great ſoever the Guilt of the action might really be eſteemed, this *Law* expreſsly diſclaimed the idea of puniſhing it on account of that Guilt ‡. If the previous Crime was not one which cauſed a Confiſcation *, or if the Criminal killed himſelf through mere *tædium vitæ* or for ſome other Cauſes mentioned ‖, no notice was taken

† Dig. 48. 21. 3. princip.

‡ "Non enim facti ſceleritatem eſſe obnoxiam". Ibid.

* Dig. 48. 21. 3. 3.

‖ Dig. 48. 21. 3. 4.; and Dig. 49. 14. 45. 2.

taken of the Suicide. Or even if his ſurviving Relations would undertake a Defence, the Confiſcation did not take place unleſs the crime was proved ‡. — In Soldiers, whoſe importance to the State, or to the ſupreme Magiſtrate, is more obvious than that of common Citizens, the *Attempt* to commit Suicide was puniſhed by the Civil Law *. According to the Motives from which the Attempt appeared to be made, the Puniſhment was Death, or Diſmiſſion with Ignominy. — If a perſon in cuſtody killed himſelf, the Puniſhment fell upon the Soldier to whom he had been committed †.

The preceding Obſervations, will, we hope, be a ſufficient Apology for our dwelling but little upon the few ſcattered paſſages which can be collected from the Ancients, in our favour. — But we would alſo give a caution againſt adducing any *contrary* opinions or practice of the Ancients, as Authority in oppoſition to the voice of Reaſon; to which we make our final Appeal.

It will be worth a moment's attention, to recollect the peculiar Manner in which Suicide is ſpoken of, by thoſe Writers among the Ancients who have favoured it. Seneca, in the language of his Sect, mentions it uſually as an action eſtabliſhed by common approbation. What is ſingular,

‡ Dig. 48. 21. 3. 8.
* Dig. 48. 19. 38. 12.; and Dig. 49. 16. 6. 7.
† Dig. 48. 3. 14. 3.

ſingular, he declines (with ſome trifling exceptions) all *Argumentation* upon the ſubject; as if forgetful of the reſpect due to thoſe who might differ from him in opinion. Accordingly, as if ſpeaking of any confeſſedly great and heroical action, he expatiates upon it by Panegyric, by a diſplay of its Advantages, by Examples. He frequently mixes and confounds it in ſuch a manner with that Contempt of Death which is truly laudable, (and which we ſcarcely think of *proving* to be ſo,) that it is difficult to diſtinguiſh which of them he means, and whether he does not intend to include both of them alike. — The ſame general idea is obſervable in others of the ancient Writers, where they happen to mention Suicide*. — Had they thought proper to *argue* upon it, we might have liſtened to their Arguments with an Attention proportioned to the Force of them. But we live in an Age which is happily ſo far advanced in true knowledge as not to regard the mere *Aſſertion* of any Philoſopher.

The Romans were eminent for a particular virtue, the Love of their Country. Are we thence to conclude, that their Practice, throughout the whole circle of moral actions, is a Pattern for

* Epictetus, in mentioning the death of Socrates, has expreſſed himſelf in ſuch a manner as to occaſion a Difficulty of the kind we have been remarking. See a Note in Carter's Epictetus, upon a paſſage in his *Diſcourſes*, B. 1. Ch. 29. §. 5.

for our Imitation? Not to inſiſt upon the fierce ſpirit which mixed itſelf with that patriotic fire in the times of the Republic, we may diſcern a Barbarity amidſt the refinements of imperial Rome, when the *Virtues* of their ruder ſtate had long been undermined by Luxury and Diſſipation. In order to juſtify the bloody act of Suicide, are we to be told of a People who could crowd with delight to a public Spectacle, where the Diverſion was purchaſed by the blood of their own Species, nay actually conſiſted in beholding the carnage? Such an Exhibition offered in a Britiſh Theatre, would be rejected with the utmoſt Indignation and Abhorrence.

Much leſs are we to be guided in our practice by the Cuſtoms of barbarous Gauls and Indians. If we are informed * that in ancient Marſeilles a public Poiſon was kept for perſons deſirous to die, if the Soldurii † among the Gauls ſhewed a ſavage kind of attachment to their Leader by putting an end to their Lives rather than ſurvive him, if even the tender Sex among the Indian nations ‡ have demonſtrated their conjugal Fidelity by throwing themſelves with alacrity upon the funeral piles of their deceaſed huſbands, (which cuſtom is mentioned by modern Writers as ſtill ſubſiſting;) are *we*, from theſe barbarous Examples, to deduce a right over our own Lives?

Upon

* Val. Max. 2. 6. 7. † Cæſ. de Bell. Gall. Lib. 3.
‡ Val. Max. 2. 6. 14.; and Cic. Tuſc. 5. 27.

Upon ſuch grounds any action whatſoever might be juſtified. Inſtances, in great numbers, are to be met with, as well in civilized as ruder nations, both of actions altogether criminal, and of actions which, though proceeding in ſome meaſure from amiable ſentiments, are not admiſſible as the modes of expreſſing thoſe ſentiments. Attachment to a General in war, and conjugal Fidelity, are laudable; but cannot authorize every capricious mode of expreſſing them. It is laudable to riſk all that a man is poſſeſſed of, when ſome ſignal Duty calls for ſuch a hazard; but this has no tendency to juſtify the ſame riſk at the Gaming Table.

If Gaming be pernicious in its Effects, the Firmneſs of mind with which any particular Gameſter may have born a reverſe of fortune, cannot alter the nature of the practice. If Suicide be an action which ought to be abhorred in its Principle and Conſequences, it is in vain to urge Examples of Moderns or Ancients; ſome of whom may poſſibly have pitched upon it as a mode of expreſſing a ſentiment of Heroiſm. — Whether Suicide *be* ſuch an action, it is now time for us to examine*.

We

* It may not be amiſs to illuſtrate by an inſtance a fallacious manner, on either ſide, of referring to Example or Opinion. The Example of Brutus may be brought in defence of Suicide: but we readily anſwer, that in the earlier part of his life, when at leiſure to philoſophize, he intirely con-

We have but a ſingle Remark to add to this Preliminary Part. If theſe pages ſhould happen to be peruſed by any one who may doubt a future State, let him remember, that this can be no excuſe for inattention to Conſiderations which lay before him the Nature of Suicide, or indeed any other action, in a moral view. Even were he ignorant *without Blame*, of future Rewards and Puniſhments, his Ignorance would not give him a licenſe to violate the Duties of Morality. Thoſe Rewards and Puniſhments are the *Sanctions*, not the *Proofs*, of our Duty. "It is not Fore-"knowledge of the Puniſhment, which renders "obnoxious to it; but merely Violating a known "Obligation *."

condemned it, even in Cato. This Opinion of his might be urged on the other ſide: but we ſhould be anſwered with equal readineſs, that afterwards he approved the action and finiſhed his life by it. Something of a like nature, on both ſides, might be ſaid of Cleomenes, king of Sparta. (See the Lives of Cleomenes and Brutus, by Plutarch.) Let us explore ſome firmer ground to tread upon.

* Bp. Butler's Preface to the ſecond Edition of his Sermons; (p. xx. Edit. of 1729). Which Preface by this maſterly Writer, may be conſulted more at large.

PART

PART II.

The Guilt of Suicide.

THE Subject before us may be reſolved into two principal Inquiries: Is Man *at Liberty* to quit Life of his own accord? And, How far can it be the *Intereſt* of any man to haſten his departure out of Life? In other words, we are to inquire into the *Guilt* of Suicide; and, into the *Folly* or *Imprudence* of it.

Its Guilt will appear more fully, by being ſeen in various lights. If in one view Suicide is perceived to be really and eſſentially Murder, if in another it diſcovers a train of pernicious Effects, conſequent upon the Commiſſion of it, if, in a third, the mere Approbation or Toleration of it, in the mind, (though not always formal and determinate,) appears likely to have a malignant influence upon the Principles of action, and to be the cauſe of Vice long before it ends in actual Suicide; each of theſe views will enable us to pronounce, that a perſon is *not* at Liberty to quit life of his own accord: and the concluſions, ſeparately drawn, but concurring in the end, will be a confirmation of each other.

But

But there is one Conſideration, diſtinct from all theſe, which ought not to be omitted in ſhewing the Guilt of Suicide. Although we ſhould fail in every article of our proof, although it could be made *probable* that Suicide is void of Guilt; yet this would afford no ſufficient ground to *act* upon: Let him who on the ſtrength of mere Probability has the hardineſs to proceed to ſuch an act,— let him, before he ſtrikes the fatal ſtroke, reflect a moment whether even the ſlighteſt *Doubt* that can remain in his breaſt ought not to reſtrain his hand. There are many caſes in moral conduct, in which a perſon is preſſed by difficulties on both ſides: he can neither advance nor retire, without a danger of doing harm. So circumſtanced, he can only uſe caution and diligence to diſcover on which ſide the bad conſequences preponderate, and guide himſelf ingenuouſly by the reſulting Probability. If ſtill he *doubts*, he is free from Blame. But, in the preſent caſe, there is no ſuch Dilemma. Suicide, we apprehend, is not committed from a perſuaſion, or ſuſpicion, that it is wrong to continue in life. The only Doubt, if any remain, muſt be, whether it be wrong to haſten our death. Until a *Certainty* can be procured, that Suicide is innocent, it muſt retain, from the ſingle circumſtance of *Doubt*, a degree of Guilt.

SECT.

SECT. I.

Suicide is Murder.

IT ſeems not impoſſible, that a perſon, attending ſolely to the uſual term, *Self-murder*, ſhould think it unneceſſary for us to prove an action ſo denominated, to be Murder. But we are to proceed with caution, if we would avoid being deceived by Words. The appellation is certainly juſt, after it has been determined that the action of a man in killing himſelf comes within the idea of Murder: but this being a point of the firſt importance in the conſideration of our ſubject, it ſeems incumbent upon us to prove rather than aſſume it.

Murder is an offence againſt the perſon murdered, and againſt the Community of which he is a member. As to the offence againſt the Community, no difference appears, whether the action be committed by the perſon himſelf whoſe life is taken away, or by another. In this reſpect, therefore, Suicide is evidently Murder.

The only queſtion muſt regard the offence againſt the Individual. It may be thought, that ſo far as he alone is concerned in the event of the action, he has a Right to do or omit it at pleaſure.

But, whatever difficulty or perplexity might be raiſed upon the meaning of the word *Right*, he certainly can have no ſuch Right as would free him from Blame in committing the action. In moral conſiderations, is there any more common ground of Blame, than the yielding to an impetuous Paſſion or Appetite in oppoſition to the dictates of cool Reaſon? Whether the conſequences of an action thus committed affect the Agent alone, or involve others, may be a further conſideration, for inveſtigating the *particular nature* of the vice, but cannot be neceſſary in determining the action to *be* a vice. Drunkenneſs, and other vices ſimilar to it in this that their principal and immediate effects terminate in the Agent, derive not their Character of Vice merely from the concomitant bad effects which extend to Society. Their pernicious effects upon the Agent himſelf, together with his weakneſs in being drawn into them in oppoſition to the dictates of his own Reaſon, are always accounted ſufficient to ſtamp them with that Character. The Murder of one man by another, is (in the breaſt of the Murderer) the victory of Revenge or ſome other inordinate Paſſion over the Authority of Reaſon. The action by which a man kills himſelf, is alſo the victory of ſome irregular Paſſion over the ſame Authority. Or, if Suicide be ever attributed to a blameleſs error of Judgment alone, the ſame account may be given, with equal juſtice, of the

Murder

Murder of others. The numerous Inſtances of Antiquity, in which one friend has killed another, (either with or without his expreſs *Conſent*, but yet as doing an act of *Kindneſs* to him,) may be imputed to an error of Judgment as fairly as any Inſtance in which Suicide can receive that palliation.

The aim then of our argument is this; that, both in reſpect of the Community and of the Individual, Suicide and the Murder of others have the ſame moral Eſſence. The Concluſion to be deduced, is a moſt important one: that wherever we meet with a *general* Prohibition of Murder, Suicide is to be underſtood as comprehended in it. Therefore when the Deity, in revealing his Will to Mankind, prohibits Murder, he *thereby* prohibits Suicide.— It has been left to the labour and ſagacity of Man, to inveſtigate more minutely the Particulars of moral conduct. But ſhould any, who have undertaken this taſk, have omitted the ſeparate conſideration of an action ſo unnatural, an action which fruſtrates the great principle of Self-preſervation; yet *their* general prohibition of Murder muſt alſo be underſtood, from the reaſon of the thing, to include Suicide as a Species of it.

Experience is intirely conſonant to this Theory. There are upon record numerous inſtances, in which Suicide has been accompanied by the Mur-

der of others: and Principles favourable to Suicide have cauſed or attended a relaxation of that abhorrence in which the Murder of others ought ever to be held. He who will not ſcruple to procure his own death when life becomes burdenſome to him, is apt to think that he may adminiſter the ſame deſperate remedy to others, when the diſtreſs of their ſituation appears to him incapable of other relief. Could we hear Virginius the Roman defending the Murder of his Daughter, perpetrated by his own hand, we ſhould probably find him uſing the ſame topics as thoſe by which he would juſtify Suicide. Such an action, occurring in the hiſtory of a nation remarkable for this fatal practice, excites not ſo much Aſtoniſhment as Horror.

In other nations alſo, there has evidently been the cloſeſt connexion between Suicide and the Murder of others. Mithridates, deprived of his kingdom, and dreading the inſolent mockery of a Roman Triumph, prepares to make his eſcape by a voluntary death. Firſt he adminiſters poiſon to his wives and daughters, then to himſelf. Indeed, in accounts of this kind, we are ſometimes at a loſs, from the words of the Hiſtorian, to pronounce whether the action is properly a Suicide with the aid of a Friend, or a Murder, in ſuppoſed kindneſs, by the hand of that Friend. Which ſhews how intimately the ideas of Suicide and Murder were often connected, in the minds

of

of the Ancients; while in ſome caſes they could approve a right aſſumed by the private Individual over another's life, as well as his own, though in other caſes, they reprobated both. — It is almoſt too horrid to relate, that a Woman and a Queen, on the loſs of her Huſband and Kingdom, ſlew her daughters with her own hands and then plunged her dagger into her own boſom. Yet we are informed that this happened in the iſland of Cyprus, ſoon after its reduction by Ptolemy, one of the immediate Succeſſors of Alexander the great. — The like ſanguinary method is ſaid to have been made uſe of, in later times *, by an inhabitant of Sicily, to preſerve his Daughters and their Mother from a Turkiſh Slavery: having done which, he ruſhed into a crowd of armed foes, and ſecured himſelf by death from the ſame dreaded Calamity.

Theſe remoter Inſtances were imitated by a private Mechanic and his Wife in this kingdom, in the year 1732. Having reſolved upon putting an end to their own lives, they firſt murdered their child, and then proceeded to a joint act of Suicide; which they executed with full effect. In a letter left by them, they profeſſed a belief of an omnipotent God and a future State; and they juſtified as well the Murder as the Suicide. If we may form a conjecture from the Verdict of Self-murder being ſo rarely brought in by a Jury, it

* Montaigne, Liv. 2. Ch. 3.

it ſeems not at all improbable that this Verdict in in the preſent inſtance might, in reality, be owing rather to the Murder of the Child than to the Suicide. Yet Motives of the ſame kind ſeem to have produced both actions; and both, in the Agents conſidered as *moral* Agents, preſent themſelves to us under the ſame general idea.—We could mention a more recent Inſtance; in which, however, the *Suicide* was attempted without effect, and the Murderer was reſerved a Victim to the Laws of his Country.

The Roman Law, regardleſs as it was of Suicide in general, yet, in a particular caſe in which it has annexed a puniſhment to the *Attempt*, has expreſſed a ſtrong apprehenſion, ariſing apparently from the connexion (in the mind of the Agent) between Suicide and the Murder of others. In the caſe ſpecified, the perſon attempting his own life, without actually killing himſelf, is to be puniſhed, *becauſe* he who has not ſpared himſelf, will much leſs ſpare another *.

* "Puniendus eſt: qui enim ſibi non pepercit, multo "minus alii parcet." Dig. 48. 21. 3. 6.

SECT.

SECT. II.

Pernicious Effects of the actual Commiſſion of Suicide.

GENERAL reaſonings upon moral ſubjects are liable to be evaded, when a perſon is urged by Paſſion or apparent Intereſt to act in oppoſition to them. If an abſtract Theory be allowed, yet Caſuiſtry is at hand to point out an eſcape under ſome ſpecious pretext, and repreſent the moſt extenſive Concluſions as inapplicable to a particular Caſe propoſed.

On this account, it ſeems not ſufficient to have ſhewn that the abſtract idea of Suicide falls in with that of Murder, ſo as to conſtitute one ſpecies of that moſt abhorred crime. It ſeems neceſſary, further, to note the pernicious *Effects* of Suicide; leſt, if any one ſhould perſiſt in denying that it ought to be ranked in the ſame claſs of Crimes with Murder, he ſhould haſtily conclude that it is no Crime at all. — Thoſe Effects which follow from the *actual Commiſſion* of the crime, ſhall firſt be taken into conſideration; afterwards, thoſe which are to be attributed to the *Principle* that juſtifies or permits the action.

The CONFISCATION of PROPERTY, when

annexed to Suicide as a Puniſhment, becomes one of the Effects after which we are inquiring; as bringing diſtreſs upon thoſe Friends who, in the uſual courſe of things, had a well-grounded expectation of the Property confiſcated. Upon the Equity and Wiſdom of this Puniſhment, we will hazard a few obſervations in another place. For the preſent we may remark, that the man who draws down this puniſhment of his own crime upon his innocent Family, cannot exculpate himſelf by laying the blame upon the Laws. Whether the Laws are well or ill conſtituted in this reſpect, he knows what is appointed as the conſequence of his violent death; and he knows how to prevent that Conſequence, — by abſtaining from the forbidden action. It becomes not him as an individual member of ſociety, to arraign the Laws of the State; any more than, as a Man, to call in queſtion the Laws of Nature, which may happen to bring inconveniences upon his moſt beloved friends. In reſpect of both, it is *his* part to conſider what relief he has a power of procuring for thoſe who are dependent upon him, and to exert himſelf accordingly; avoiding always whatever the operation either of human Laws or phyſical Cauſes may render prejudicial to thoſe objects of his care.

But, in our own nation, the Confiſcation of Property is frequently avoided by a Verdict of Lunacy. What does this ſhew? That a certain

number

number of perſons, ſtrangers perhaps to a Widow and her Children, whoſe intereſts come under their determination, will ſometimes, in compaſſion, to private diſtreſs, violate the public laws; when the Huſband and Father could not be induced, by the ſame motive, to obey thoſe laws. It will be ſaid perhaps, he knew, or had good reaſon to expect, that the Jury *would* pay this regard to thoſe whom he deſerts. But whence this Expectation? From obſerving that the like has happened in paſt inſtances. Which brings us back to the former idea; that Juries, in oppoſition to Law, have ſhewn a compaſſionate attention which, in the deceaſed perſon, both Law and private Duty had called for in vain.

The DISGRACE to a ſurviving Family, ſo far as ſuch Diſgrace does actually exiſt, admits a reflexion upon it ſimilar to one which was made upon the Confiſcation of Property. It is not the part of a Huſband, a Father, a Brother, to argue thus; "If my voluntary Death brings Diſgrace "upon my Widow or Family, let it be charged "to the account of thoſe who, with ſuch manifeſt "impropriety, attribute a Diſgrace to others, "which cannot belong to any perſon beſides my-"ſelf." No; let him, with more Juſtice and more Generoſity, argue in the following manner. "It is true, the Infamy of an action of which I "am the ſole author, muſt be due to myſelf "alone;

"alone; and they who extend it to my ſurviving "Friends, ſhew an ignorance or diſregard of the "plaineſt principles of Equity. But if the Man-"ners of the age and country in which I live, "are ſuch, that in fact a degree of Ignominy "will fall upon thoſe whom I leave behind me, "it is idle for me to remonſtrate; where the "Blame lies, is a ſeparate queſtion; it is enough "for me that I have a power of preventing the "Infamy; I *will* prevent it; I will live."

The SORROW which ariſes upon the Loſs of a Friend, is heightened to the moſt pungent Diſtreſs, if that Friend has periſhed by his own hand. The moſt calm and gentle Death, attended with every alleviation, both in reſpect of the dying perſon and of his friends, is uſually no ſmall ſhock to the latter. Minds of the firmeſt contexture, and retained in the beſt diſcipline, if not void of common ſenſibility, cannot at once reconcile themſelves to the change. Add but the circumſtance of *Violence*, either accidental or by the lawleſs attack of the aſſaſſin; and the ſhock is redoubled upon the Survivors: even the robuſt conſtitution may long experience its effects; weaker and more delicate frames are ſometimes thrown into a ſtate of diſorder from which they never perfectly recover. But if the Violence proceeds from the hand of him who falls by it, a certain Amazement is ſuperadded to the more

common

common ſenſations: and while Sorrow, Commiſeration, Apprehenſion, Abhorrence, contend for the poſſeſſion of the mind, they ſpread devaſtation over the ſcene of their mutual conflict.

This Diſtreſs of Mind naturally falls upon the ſame perſons who are expoſed to the Effects mentioned above; Confiſcation of Property, and Diſgrace (ſo far as it exiſts). Is it poſſible for us to combine them all, and afterwards to heſitate a moment in determining, whether the premiditated Cauſe of ſuch accumulated miſery can be an action free from Guilt? If this *were* poſſible, we might further reflect upon the ties of Duty and Affection, by which the Author of this Miſery was bound to have conferred, upon the ſame Individuals, all the Happineſs in his power. To have brought this Diſtreſs upon perſons merely indifferent, would have been cruel and inhuman: — to bring it upon one who has claims from the moſt intimate of all connexions, from the moſt ſolemn engagements, cemented by long familiarity and mutual good offices, — to bring it upon thoſe whom natural affection and their dependent ſtate have made the objects of a foſtering care; — this is a Guilt which requires not the eye of a Philoſopher to diſcern it, but muſt be evident to the youngeſt Diſciples of a rude Morality.

INJURIES demand Reparation. And whatever

ever prevents this Reparation, may from that time be conſidered as a Cauſe of the ſubſequent Evil which originates from the Injuries committed. Here we diſtinguiſh a very common Effect of Suicide. That it puts a ſtop to the Reparation of any Injuries which may have been committed, is manifeſt. But Experience informs us, further, that the moſt frequent inſtances of it (in the preſent times at leaſt) are among the perſons whoſe lives have been replete with Injury in their ſocial Connexions.

Nor is this repugnant to Theory. It is an acknowledged truth, that men contract an Affection for thoſe on whom they have conferred Benefits: it ſeems equally true, that thoſe whom they have injured become objects of Averſion and Diſguſt. If then we ſee a perſon who, inſtead of *Duty*, has made *Pleaſure* (as he falſely terms it,) his rule of life, who has every moment ſacrificed the intereſts of all around him, together with his own, to the meaneſt Gratifications, — who, by a perſeverance in this courſe, has involved himſelf in one common ruin with thoſe for whom he once had the moſt tender regard; — if we ſee ſuch a perſon flying from all whom he has thus injured, as diſguſted with the ſight of them, we obſerve nothing contrary to the Analogy of experience. Two Paths are preſented to him. The one would lead him, through a laborious and humiliating Reparation of Injuries, to a recovery

covery of loſt Honour and Serenity. The other, withdrawing him from every perception beſides that of his own preſent ſufferings, points him to Deſpair, and Suicide. In our imagination we inſtantaneouſly direct him to the former; but the accurate Obſerver of Mankind bids us be prepared to find him in the latter.

Under the Head of Injuries, and amongſt thoſe which in the utmoſt ſtrictneſs of Juſtice demand Reparation, are the Debts which a perſon has contracted. Though he could be ſuppoſed on all other accounts at liberty to quit life when he pleaſed; yet, if his Continuance in life, with the proper application of his time and talents to procure the means of payment, affords the only proſpect of relief to his Creditors, his Eſcape by voluntary Death is direct Injuſtice. He appears equally guilty with the diſſolute and lawleſs Vagrant; who, rather than ſubmit to honeſt labour, ſeizes to his own uſe whatever he can ſeize with impunity. — But we haſten to Conſiderations which are more general.

Excluſive of Harm, cauſed or prolonged, the PREVENTION OF GOOD comes within the idea of Guilt. Let it be allowed that a man has committed no Injuries, contracted no Debts; let us exclude the Confiſcation of Property, with all the other Effects of Suicide, which we have enumerated. Yet, to throw away at once every poſſible

ble Opportunity of doing Good, appears inconſiſtent with the character of Philanthropy. Duty to our Fellow-creatures muſt extend to poſitive Exertions for their Happineſs or Relief, as well as to a ſimple Abſtinence from Injury. Although a perſon may leave his Dependents in proſperous circumſtances, yet his Continuance in life might add to their Proſperity. Although it ſhould be denied that an Increaſe of Affluence would yield an Increaſe of Happineſs, yet every perſon has it in his power, in a variety of methods in which Riches are not immediately concerned, to relieve the accidental Sufferings of thoſe with whom he lives, to aſſiſt them in Difficulties, to conſole them under Cares and Anxieties, to heighten their Pleaſures and Enjoyments.

But it is alleged, "I have no dependent Fa-"mily, no Attachments to detain me; it is to no "purpoſe that I ſhould continue in life againſt "my inclination; let others ſubmit to this re-"ſtraint, who have connexions that may require "it of them." This Plea, if real and ſincere, is founded in Ignorance. The Claims which the particular Connexions of every man have upon his ſervices, are not to be conceived as in contradiction to the Claims of Mankind in general. There is indeed a ſufficient reaſon why he ſhould ſtudy the proſperity of ſome perſons in preference to that of others; which is, that ſuch a Rule of action, eſtabliſhed in the world, tends upon the whole

whole to promote the public Good. The Aggregate of human Happineſs muſt be greater, if every one exerts himſelf in behalf of thoſe, with whoſe Circumſtances, Intereſts, and Inclinations he is beſt acquainted, thoſe whom his own Situation gives him the beſt Opportunities of aſſiſting, and whom he will ſerve both moſt effectually and with the greateſt pleaſure to himſelf, on account of the Affection which mixes with the ſenſe of Duty: — the Happineſs of Men will riſe higher upon this ſyſtem of action, than if each perſon either labours for the intereſts of the whole human Race, taken collectively, or ſelects a few Individuals with an arbitrary caprice. But ſhould it happen that any one has no remaining connexions by Blood or Friendſhip, it is true, he no longer has the particular objects of his attention ſo clearly pointed out to him: but his general duty to Mankind remains; and he muſt uſe a prudent diſcretion in ſelecting objects proper to ſupply (in ſome degree) the place of thoſe whom he has loſt. If his Station and Talents do not empower him to comprehend a World or a Nation in the Scope of his labours, he may find innumerable methods of employing himſelf to ſome uſeful though leſs extenſive purpoſe.

But perhaps it will be further ſuppoſed, that a perſon lies under a total Incapacity of diſcharging the duties of life; and that his caſe is ſuch as admits no Relief. With what reaſon this Suppoſition

poſition can be made, will fall under our notice afterwards: let it be made, however; and we will take the opportunity of ſhewing that it cannot exempt Suicide from Guilt. The Caſe (if ever it exiſt) muſt not only be rare, but extremely difficult to aſcertain. The Limits which ſeparate it from Caſes pretending to be the ſame, cannot be defined with the preciſion neceſſary in marking out an Exception to a general Rule of moral conduct.

General Rules are of the utmoſt conſequence, they are abſolutely neceſſary, for the guidance of human actions. Were no kind of action to be accounted wrong, further than in thoſe particular Inſtances in which, taken ſeparately, the Harm reſulting from it could be made to appear, this would open a Latitude of judging and acting which might end in unlimited Licentiouſneſs. What is proved to be *uſually* pernicious, muſt be *univerſally* prohibited. If every perſon were allowed in his own caſe to make exceptions to general prohibitions, we ſhould find one juſtifying a Theft from the extreme neceſſity of his circumſtances; another would juſtify a Murder, as a benefit to Mankind in cutting off a peſtilent member of Society; and even perſons who might intend to be ingenuous in forming a judgment, would often be led to make Exceptions which could not be warranted.

There is probably no State of Mind, there are perhaps

perhaps no Circumſtances, which will more ſtrongly incline a perſon to make an unwarrantable Exception to a general Rule of conduct, than thoſe which prompt men to Suicide. A deep Melancholy, a fit of Jealouſy, a ſudden Reverſe of fortune, diſturb the Powers of the Mind and expoſe us to be deceived by our own perceptions. Under ſuch Influence as this, the reaſoning faculties ought not to be intruſted with a point ſo delicate, as that of excuſing ourſelves from a Rule which is to continue binding upon the reſt of mankind. — No allowance therefore can be made in behalf of perſons pleading the Peculiarity of their ſituation: but Suicide muſt ſtand *univerſally* condemned.

SECT. III.

Effects of the Principle which permits Suicide.

WE might have drawn out to a much greater length, the pernicious Effects of Suicide actually committed. But being, for the moſt part, obvious to the obſerving eye, they would be liable to loſe much of their force if delineated with a prolix minuteneſs. They have likewiſe been repeatedly a ſubject of diſquiſition to the Moraliſt and Divine. It ſeems therefore

better to turn our thoughts to a very important Conſideration, which appears not to have been regarded with ſufficient attention: — the Effects produced in the actions of any perſon, by an habitual and prevailing idea in his mind, approving (in ſome ſort) or permitting Suicide. We will explain our meaning more at large.

Probably the commiſſion of other Crimes, as well as of Suicide, is frequently avoided leſs through Principle than from the abſence of Temptation. But he who is thus prevented by mere Accident from the Commiſſion of them, is not only deficient in the integrity of virtuous Sentiment, but may be led into *Actions* which are hurtful, though diſtinct from the Crimes which, as we have ſuppoſed, he eſcapes by having no Temptation to commit them. The man that ſcruples not to remove out of his way by Treachery or open Force thoſe who obſtruct his purſuits, will be ready to engage in enterprizes which, though they may not happen to draw him into actual Murder, may yet be very detrimental to Society. A perſon who will *deceive* without ſcruple, whenever he finds occaſion, may perhaps never be reduced to perjure himſelf; nay, it is *poſſible* that he may never in fact utter a falſhood: but he will probably be guilty of many actions in which he would not have allowed himſelf, if he had been firmly attached to the Principle of Veracity: if a real abhorrence of the arts of Deceit

ceit had precluded the uſe of them as a ſecurity from Detection.

In like manner, if a perſon has Suicide in his eye, as a Reſource in caſe of extreme diſtreſs, it may happen that he ſhall never be reduced to what he calls a *Neceſſity* of removing himſelf out of the world; but he may nevertheleſs, by his Confidence in ſuch a Reſource, be incited to an irregular and pernicious conduct. If we can make this to appear, the Guilt of Suicide will be not a little confirmed. And the Harm derived from this particular origin, may be called, the bad Effects of *the Principle which permits Suicide.*

It is not meant, that every perſon who *acts* upon this *Principle*, as we have called it, has formed a full and determinate Reſolution to die when his affairs are brought to any certain Criſis, or when Life becomes an Evil in his eſtimation. Nor, of thoſe who may have formed ſuch a Reſolution, is it probable that all have done it with Views and Sentiments perfectly ſimilar. *One* has reaſoned himſelf into a perſuaſion of the Rectitude of Suicide: another, more culpable, has taken his Reſolution either againſt Conviction, or under the uncertainty of Doubt. And the Degrees of Doubt are infinitely variable. But men, in their general conduct give proof of little Foreſight or previous Determination. Wherefore it is probable, that thoſe who have made a formal (though only eventual) Reſolution to take

refuge in Suicide, are but few in compariſon of thoſe who, without a ſimilar Reſolution, would actually put a period to their Lives in ſimilar caſes; and who, by their habitual ſtate of mind, being at the mercy of conſpiring circumſtances, which may impel them to Suicide, are to be conceived as acting under that *Principle* which we have propoſed to conſider. But here again is an infinite Variety of perſons, of whom this habitual ſtate of mind may be predicated. Some would *ſooner* be reduced to the Commiſſion of the crime; others with more difficulty. Some, thinking it allowable *in general* to quit Life when they pleaſe, would yet refuſe to do it when they diſtinctly foreſaw conſequential Injury to ſurviving Friends. Others, with the cruelty of cowards, would knowingly plunge the innocent Survivors into the deepeſt calamities, rather than abſtain from this unnatural Outrage upon themſelves. — It appeared neceſſary to hint at this great Variety of Caſes: leſt we ſhould be underſtood to apply the following Obſervations indiſcriminately to all of them, and, in ſo doing, ſhould be thought too ſevere towards perſons in the lower degrees of blame, or too mild with thoſe in the higheſt.

The firſt Particular that occurs to be mentioned, is indeed more confined and leſs flagrant than ſome which we ſhall preſently take notice of; but will have its weight with a generous mind:

mind: — a mind that can commiſerate in others the pain of anxious Suſpenſe, the *continued* Fear of an event which yet may never happen. If a perſon is known or ſuſpected to have embraced the *Principle* we are condemning, he becomes the Cauſe of ſerious Diſtreſs to thoſe who are naturally intereſted in every thing that regards him. Apprehenſions for his fate cannot be intirely ſuppreſſed, even while his circumſtances wear a face of proſperity. But when Clouds obſcure his proſpects, when Diſappointment has given a ſhock to his Senſibility, when heavy Calamities threaten or oppreſs him, his Friends then tremble with anxiety, endeavouring with painful attention to prevent the dreaded Cataſtrophe, but ſenſible that Prevention is not altogether in their power.

Although this were the only accuſation we could bring againſt Suicide, we are confident there are in the world Souls of ſo generous and enlarged ſentiments, that, to reſtore a peaceful Serenity of mind to their anxious Friends, they would diſavow every idea which could give juſt cauſe of Apprehenſion. — But we advance to Accuſations of a higher nature.

If a perſon who admits Suicide as a Reſource, ſhould analyſe his inmoſt thoughts with impartiality, and utter them without reſerve, we might hear him expreſſing himſelf to the following ef-

fect. "I am told by ſolemn and ſupercilious
"preachers of morality, that the Being who
"placed me in this world intended me for pur-
"poſes of a ſuperiour nature (as they pretend)
"to the mere Enjoyment of my Life. I ſhall
"not undertake a laborious Inveſtigation, to ex-
"amine the ground and proof of their aſſertions.
"Time preſſes on; and that ſhort portion of life
"which alone affords Enjoyment may eaſily be
"waſted in the Speculation. I feel within me
"an Impulſe to purſue my immediate Happi-
"neſs; and I will not check that Impulſe. Why
"may I not preſume it to be the voice of my
"Creator, dictating the conduct which I ſhould
"purſue? Why ſhould I perplex myſelf with the
"artificial and fallible deductions of *Reaſon*,
"whether my own, or of other men? Here,
"then, I conſign to oblivion thoſe dull Maxims,
"which, under the title of Virtue, would teach
"me to diſtract myſelf by an aſſiduous attention
"to the Rights and Intereſts of others, in-
"ſtead of giving myſelf freely to my own
"Gratification, or, under the name of Prudence,
"to lay in a ſtock of Health and Riches, before
"the approach of that ſeaſon in which I muſt
"expect the vigour of all my powers and capa-
"cities to abate. Be theſe the Maxims of per-
"ſons who conceive themſelves to be impriſoned
"here by a Tyrant. I have no other dread of
"Poverty, Pain, or old Age, than as putting an

"end

"end to my Enjoyments. Againſt a continued
"ſuffering under ſuch Evils, I am fully provided.
"Secure of a Retreat from every misfortune, I
"will exhauſt my Wealth upon ſuch objects as
"it can procure for me, while my mind and
"body retain the Vigour which alone can ſtamp
"a Value upon thoſe objects. Why ſhould I
"ſhackle myſelf with the fetters of Frugality?
"Why be my own tormentor, in reſerving this
"Pelf to a ſeaſon when Impotence and Inſenſibi-
"lity muſt render it uſeleſs to me? — Or, why
"ſhould I lay the tax of an abſtemious Temper-
"ance upon my Pleaſures, under pretence of
"preſerving my Health and Faculties? Life is
"of doubtful duration. Why ſhould I, in hopes
"of future Enjoyments ſtill more uncertain,
"ſpare my bodily Conſtitution; when for this
"end I muſt deny myſelf what is preſent and
"certain? In what ſervice can this mortal Frame
"better be worn out, than in adminiſtering to
"my immediate Happineſs? When it is no
"longer able to anſwer this purpoſe, I can
"readily procure my own Diſmiſſion; after hav-
"ing compreſſed into the ſpace of a few years
"all the Good which others, by intermixing it
"with the Miſery of Labour, Temperance, and
"Diſcipline, expand into a much more tedious
"length of time. When I have extracted from
"Life all that makes it worth preſerving, I will
"releaſe myſelf; ſecretly exulting in triumph

"over thoſe, who imagine themſelves bound to "drag on an old Age of Diſeaſe, Pain, Stupor, "and Infirmity."

Who does not ſee that this is a Language which leads to a general Diſſoluteneſs of Manners, a Contempt of all the Obligations which ariſe in ſocial life? And who that ſees this, will afterwards maintain, that the *Principle*, permitting Suicide, is a matter of ſmall conſequence, though it ſhould not end in the Act itſelf? — But this is a point which, by its importance, merits a further Illuſtration. And let it not be thought an offence againſt the ſeriouſneſs of our ſubject, that, with this view, we deſcend to a particular Inſtance. In which, alſo, if we ſhould ſtate the caſe with ſomething more of a determinate and theoretical preciſion, than is be found in real Facts; as this will not imply the Aſſertion of any thing contradictory to Experience, ſo by its Simplicity will it be better ſuited to the purpoſe for which it is adduced.

Suppoſe then a perſon, at the age of twenty years, entering into Life; who looks forward to his Reſources, and to the particular manner in which he ſhould deſire to paſs through the world, with more accuracy than is perhaps very uſual at that age. He finds, upon his ſurvey, that, with a moderate degree of Induſtry in ſome particular Profeſſion, joined to the annual Produce of his Patrimony, he ſhall be able, not only to

procure

procure all the advantages of life which his Birth and early Habits can demand, but alſo to provide an honourable and indulgent retreat for old age. But he finds, on the other hand, that if he will break through the limits of his annual Income, and enter upon the Subſtance of his paternal Property, he ſhall then be able, without the aid of his own Induſtry, to ſupply himſelf, during the ſpace of twenty years to come, with a plentiful ſhare of thoſe Luxuries in which he eſteems happineſs to conſiſt. The queſtion is, whether he ſhall take the former method, become an uſeful Member of Society, content himſelf with that moderate and mixed Enjoyment which the natural courſe of things allows to men, and continue his life as long as he is permitted to live; or take the latter method, baniſh from his thoughts the Intereſts of Society, give himſelf up to his own private Enjoyments, and put an end to his life when he has thus exhauſted the means of continuing it in riot and debauchery.

If he adopts the former method, it will be no unnatural ſuppoſition to conceive that he lives to the age of ſixty years: in which caſe he will have been an uſeful Member of Society, for the ſpace of forty years, from the time when he formed his reſolutions and plan of life. If the latter method be his choice, he periſhes after having exiſted (from the ſame time) a noxious Member of Society during twenty years.

It is immaterial to our concluſion, whether he completes the period of time which he had fixed upon, and carries his predetermined Suicide into execution, or is prevented by an earlier death owing to natural cauſes. For, in either caſe, the continued Injuries committed, the Duties neglected, through a long courſe of years, and the Guilt by theſe means contracted, have ariſen from the *Principle* upon which a ſcheme of action ſo inequitable and ſo ungenerous was planned.

To ſee diſtinctly and fully the pernicious nature of ſuch conduct, the way would be to conceive *every* perſon as embracing it: that is, every perſon who is unable to command, by the annual Produce of his patrimonial property, ſo much of the induſtry of other men as is neceſſary to his wiſhes; but who can command it for ſome certain portion of time, if he be willing to exhauſt that Property. The number of perſons in this ſituation is very great. Should they all purſue a diſſolute courſe of life ſo long as their finances would ſupport them in it, depending upon Suicide as the means of eſcaping Poverty and Diſtreſs; the conſequences would be extenſively felt. Society muſt be burdened with a number of uſeleſs Beings; whoſe Induſtry is loſt to the Public, not merely for that portion of time by which their lives are ſhortened, but even while they remain in life.

But

But the *Principle* which we are considering, leads to actions more highly pernicious than such as are usually comprized under the general description of a dissolute life. The connexion between *Murder* and Suicide, both in theory and experience, we have already seen. In other actions also to which the municipal Laws have annexed capital punishments, men who are fearless of Death though not insensible to the Ignominy of a public Execution, are freed from restraint, when once they have determined to become their own Executioners in case of immediate danger from the civil Power.

That there are men *perfectly* fearless of death, may be doubted. But what comes to the same thing in the present argument will readily be granted; which is, that there are men in whom the Fear of Death is not strong enough to restrain them from the commission of crimes. And it will also be easily granted, that the Fear of Ignominy is frequently found more powerful than the Fear of Death; (however inconsistent this may appear, where Death is considered as the introduction to future Punishment.) Upon the whole, then, it may easily happen, that a person, with whom the Fear of Death has lost its effect, may yet be restrained by the Fear of Ignominy from the commission of a capital crime; unless this latter Fear has been removed by a confidence in voluntary death, to prevent the Ignominy.

But

But whenever a perſon is thus delivered from all that to him appears terrible in Death, we may apprehend Effects of a moſt alarming nature. With reſpect to him, capital Puniſhments are annulled. Mankind have the ſame reaſon to dread from him every violation of their rights, as if the Laws which affix the puniſhment of death to certain actions had never been eſtabliſhed. Augment the *Number* of ſuch perſons; and the firſt Purpoſes of Society are deſtroyed. Security is fled; Life and Property are precarious; perpetual Conſternation and Alarm caſt a damp upon private Felicity, and check the happy progreſs of Civilization. But what preſents this terrible aſpect, when conceived as prevailing to a great extent, is equally reprehenſible, in reſpect of mental depravity, however ſmall the Number of thoſe who adopt it. And the Principle which has a natural tendency towards crimes ſo flagitious, ought to meet with a peremptory excluſion, when, under the moſt ſpecious pretences, it ſolicits admittance into the human breaſt.

It is evident that all theſe Effects are diſtinct from the Conſequences of Suicide itſelf, and may ariſe without the actual Commiſſion of it. But ſince all moral Evil has its exiſtence in the Mind rather than in external Action, and ſince the Guilt of Suicide is therefore to be looked for in the Principle, Sentiment, or Paſſion, from which it pro-

proceeds; for this reason, *all* the Effects of the Principle, (provided they appear to follow from the Nature of it, and not to be merely accidental,) are properly taken into the account, as well as the final Act, in estimating the Guilt of Suicide.

PART

PART III.

The Folly or Imprudence of Suicide.

HAVING gone through ſuch Obſervations as have occurred, tending to prove the *Guilt* of Suicide, we ſhall now endeavour to ſhew the *Folly* or *Imprudence* of it. By which we muſt be underſtood to mean ſomething different from the Imprudence taken as a Conſequence of the Guilt. All Guilt is Imprudence. Every man is imprudent as well as vicious, when he indulges any propenſity to Vice: the Puniſhment annexed to it will outweigh the Advantage that he can derive from it.

This Conſideration, if not too ſimple and evident to be enlarged upon, yet, being common to all the different Species of Guilt, cannot with propriety receive a minute diſcuſſion when we are confined to a ſingle one. But we may remark ſomething peculiarly forcible in the reflexion, that Suicide is the concluding action of a man's life. It would be contrary to our intention, to give even the Shadow of an Encouragement to any Crime whatſoever, by making a diſtinction between Suicide and other Crimes; as if *they* might be ſafely committed, upon the ſtrength of a deliberate Intention to repent of them afterwards

and

and repair their bad Effects. Yet we cannot avoid obſerving, that even this weakeſt of all pretences, under which men may tranſgreſs their Duty, is wanting in Suicide. It is indeed a modeſty becoming the imperfection of human knowledge, to decline pronouncing deciſively, upon every individual who falls by his own hand, that he is neceſſarily conſigned to Puniſhment in a future State: nevertheleſs, an action which cloſes finally the Opportunities of rectifying what is wrong, ought to make us ſhudder at the very Idea of an approach to it. — But we are now to ſuppoſe that Suicide is indifferent in reſpect of moral Good or Evil; in order to ſhew the Imprudence of it, as diſtinct from its Guilt:

In the firſt place, however low may be the Importance of this Life eſtimated alone, yet, if conſidered as preparatory to a future Life, of endleſs duration, it appears immediately of the higheſt Conſequence. Though we ſuppoſe ourſelves *at Liberty* to finiſh our preſent life when we pleaſe, can it be our *Intereſt* to cut off any portion of the time which we believe capable of producing to us an immenſity of Happineſs? That Happineſs which exceeds our conceptions even by its Duration alone, muſt, in receiving an Addition, large or ſmall, to its Intenſeneſs, be *increaſed* alſo in a proportion which will exceed all our conception. Nothing therefore which we can ſuffer in the preſent

ſent life can be too high a price to pay for the purchaſe of ſuch Addition to our future Felicity. Can it be our Intereſt to throw away voluntarily any Opportunity of making this Acquiſition? There is no *Certainty*, we confeſs, that a perſon, in prolonging his preſent Life, will lay up an Addition of Happineſs againſt Futurity: but we preſume it will be allowed us to aſſert, that, if he does not, it muſt be his own neglect. No Situation in Life can be found, which does not give occaſion to the exerciſe of many Virtues: and in the Situations in which Suicide is moſt frequent, Virtues of a moſt elevated kind are demanded.—Yet were the Proſpect, of adding to our future Happineſs, no more than a Probability which was independent of our own actions,—a mere *Chance*,—the Object is of ſuch magnitude, that it would be Raſhneſs and Folly to reject even the ſmalleſt Chance of it.

If *this* Life alone be conſidered, melancholy minds will be apt, in ſome ſituations, to pronounce that there is no room for Argument:—they ſee evidently, they feel, that Annihilation is more eligible than the Exiſtence to which they have here been doomed. But let them at leaſt ſuſpend their judgment, till they hear what may be urged on the oppoſite ſide: otherwiſe, even if their opinion were right, they muſt incur the charge of being prejudiced. Though we are arguing upon the ſuppoſition that Suicide is allowable,

and,

and, for the preſent, have even excluded the conſideration of a future State, we by no means deſpair of evincing, that the Privilege of Suicide is far from being ſo deſirable as ſome dejected and melancholy perſons are prone to imagine.

One principal miſtake ſeems to be, that they are diſpoſed to think the Evils under which they labour, irremediable and perpetual, when in reality they have no juſt ground for ſuch a concluſion. In bodily Diſeaſes, it is true, we are able, frequently, to form a reaſonable conjecture reſpecting their continuance. Yet, even in theſe, Relief is ſometimes experienced, beyond all expectation.—But the Diſtreſs which is attributed to the diſorder of the Body, and conceived as originating in ſomething wholly extraneous, ſeems often, in a great degree, owing to the wrong ſtate of the Mind. Men give way to Paſſions and Habits which either directly bring on bodily Diſeaſe, or co-operate with external cauſes to produce it, or, laſtly, render the Sufferer unequal to the burden of a diſtempered Body: and yet, when Sickneſs makes an attack, the compounded Diſtreſs is imputed to a ſimple and accidental diſturbance of the corporeal Machine.

Now, with regard to ſo much of this Diſtreſs as ought to be referred to the Mind, and with regard to all Evils purely mental, the dejected and melancholy are extremely apt to deſpair of a Remedy without ſufficient reaſon. They ſeem to

forget the vaſt powers of the Mind, in wearing off gradually its moſt inveterate Habits and acquiring others more ſuited to its ſituation; in correcting its Sentiments, Inclinations, and Averſions, and in rectifying the errors of Opinion. They are ſo occupied with their preſent ſenſations, that they neglect to look forward to the Reſources which are provided for them.

The mere diminution of Senſibility which uſually happens in the prolongation of mental Diſtreſs, will operate as a partial Remedy. The Senſibility of the Sufferer is as properly included in our idea of the *Cauſe* of his miſery, as any external Cauſe that can be aſſigned. And a diminution of his Senſibility will operate as effectually towards removing the Evil, as a diminution or partial removal of the external Cauſe.

A change of Opinion may intirely remove the Evil. For example, I am overwhelmed with Diſgrace, which I have incurred amongſt a particular claſs of men; I abhor myſelf, I ſhun the face of every human creature, I loathe my food, I deteſt the earth, the air, the common benefits of nature, and am preparing to plunge a dagger in my boſom. Some Accident interpoſes a Delay; which gives me leiſure to inquire into the nature of the action whence my Diſgrace has ariſen. Upon cool reflexion, I find nothing culpable in the action: nay, it appears commendable. I am confirmed in my Change of Opinion by the concurrence

currence of ſome perſons in whoſe diſcernment and principles I can confide. The Change in my ſentiments is even ſo great, that I glory in the imputation thrown upon me by men whom I no longer eſteem, and whoſe Praiſe (I am *now* convinced) would be real Ignominy. The Evil from which I was flying, is gone. I caſt away my dagger, and live a grateful and contented Being.

All this, perhaps you ſay, is but negative: it holds forth to you no poſitive happineſs, which might induce you to bear up againſt the ills of life; it only points out a poſſibility, or, at beſt, a probability above your expectation, of being delivered from the Miſery of which you complain. You require a Reaſon, why you ſhould wait theſe uncertain events, rather than immediately ſecure your Eaſe by means which are in your own Power. Is then the natural Love of life extinguiſhed? If indeed that great principle, which was implanted in you, actuate you no longer, have you candidly examined whether it be not through your own fault? — But we will not refuſe to give you an important Reaſon, why you ſhould for your own ſake wiſh to prolong your Life.

It is, the Pleaſure to be derived from the exerciſe of Benevolence. Render yourſelf uſeful to Mankind. Attend to the Misfortunes of others.

Deliberate, as if the buſineſs were your own, (which in reality it is,) how you may adminiſter relief to the miſerable who fall under your notice: enter into their feelings, and ſympathize with their ſorrows. Be aſſured it will divert that ſtrict attention to your own miſery, which forms no inconſiderable part of the miſery itſelf, and will ſupply you with a ſource of poſitive Enjoyment, to which your moſt private thoughts and cooleſt reflexion will give a reiterated approbation.

You anſwer, that the Object which we have preſented to your purſuit is not an Object which can put you in motion. Benevolence you have regarded as a Duty, not a Pleaſure: or if there was a time when it gratified ſome finer feelings within you, ere man's Ingratitude had worn them down, the remembrance is too faint to counterpoiſe your preſent Languor and Dejection. You ſtill inſiſt that you are condemned to a miſery which admits no Relief but by removing yourſelf out of the world.

Our Reply is, that, if you have loſt the Sentiment which makes the exerciſe of Benevolence to be a Delight, you have loſt one of the nobleſt Characteriſtics of Humanity. Beware of placing confidence in the dictates of your Judgment, which muſt certainly receive a wrong bias from ſo diſordered, ſo depraved a ſtate of the Affections. Make it your firſt buſineſs, to replace what is eſſential to the juſt conſtitution of your mind, in order

order to recover the free and complete uſe of your reaſoning faculties. If a curious piece of mechaniſm had loſt one of its principal parts, you would not think of applying it to the purpoſes for which it was conſtructed, till you had ſupplied the defect. No more ought you to confide in your mental powers, as the guide of your actions, while you remain deſtitute of that natural Sentiment which impels us to do good to our fellow-creatures, as Hunger impels us to ſeek our food.

When you have effected this Reformation, when you have, as it were, put the Machinery of your Mind in order; you may then, but not till then, aſk yourſelf the queſtion, Is Suicide deſirable? You will reject the idea with horror. You will congratulate yourſelf upon your eſcape from an unnatural and depraved ſtate of mind; you will rejoice in the recovery of thoſe Senſations, whoſe final Cauſe is ſo ſtrongly marked by the miſery of ſurrounding objects; and, however ready to obey the ſummons of Death, you will find an attachment to Life, ſufficiently powerful to prevent you from laying it down of your own accord.

With regard to the *Means* of effecting this happy Reformation, it ſeems not to lie within our province to deſcribe them at large. But *one* idea we will venture to ſuggeſt. In order to ſurmount the firſt difficulties, hazard an experiment: uſe a degree of Compulſion with your-

ſelf. Engage reſolutely, though it may be reluctantly, in that beneficent train of Action, into which, if our Theory be juſt, you ought naturally to be impelled by your inward ſentiment of Benevolence. The Courſe to which we point, appears, no doubt, the rugged road of Diſcipline: but it may lead you ſooner than you are aware, into thoſe paths of pure and real pleaſure, in which you purſue your own happineſs by promoting that of others; in which a delicious Confuſion of Intereſts cauſes the felicity of every man not only to *appear*, but to *be*, your own.

Still we hear you, tenacious of your gloomy cauſe, declaring, with an appearance of Modeſty, that it is out of your *Power* to be uſeful to Mankind. But you would do well to examine, whether this Appearance of Modeſty be not a veil which hides the moſt arrogant Preſumption. Perhaps you are ſtraitened by Poverty, enfeebled by Diſeaſe; and you conclude yourſelf incapable of contributing to the happineſs of thoſe around you. Nay, you muſt conclude it impoſſible that you ſhould recover the Capacity of doing good. Otherwiſe your Plea has no force. It is of no avail, as an argument for Suicide, that you are *now* uſeleſs to the World, unleſs there ſhould appear a neceſſity of your continuing to be ſo. — Vain and arrogant Mortal: preſuming to diſcern, as with the eye of Omniſcience, all the Effects which your preſent Faculties and Opportunities

are

are capable of producing; and to foreſee that in futurity no Events will happen which may reſtore to you more copious Powers of Uſefulneſs!

The Œconomy of this world forms too large an Object for the human eye to receive within its view; and the ſecret movements of the Syſtem are too minute for man's intellectual viſion. Had you the Modeſty ſuited to human Comprehenſion, you would acknowledge yourſelf totally incompetent to judge, in what various modes and to what extent you are connected with thoſe of your own ſpecies, or to determine how widely the conſequences of your actions may diffuſe themſelves. Commit every thing of this nature to him who alone can comprehend, with equal eaſe, what is ſimple and what is complicated; who alone is able, without embarraſſment, to purſue an unity of deſign through the moſt intricate mazes, and to produce from Parts apparently the moſt diſcordant a Harmony of the Whole. Your Imitation of that Being reaches not to theſe departments, but may find ample ſcope in what we have been recommending, the exerciſe of Benevolence.

PART IV.

Some Objections answered.

LET us now turn our eyes to the oppoſite ſide of the queſtion: leſt a total neglect of thoſe who have argued in behalf of Suicide, ſhould indicate, either a greater Contempt of them than a mere oppoſition of ſentiments can warrant, or a Conciouſneſs of ſome Defect in our own Cauſe. At the ſame time it is neceſſary we ſhould recollect that this Subject will introduce us into a ſpacious field of controverſy: where we cannot expect that any Reader ſhould attend us, unleſs we confine ourſelves within certain limits.

An Eſſay on Suicide, aſcribed to the late *Mr. Hume*, puts on the appearance of regular argumentation, and undertakes to ſhew that Suicide may be conſiſtent with our Duty to God, our Neighbour, and ourſelves. Under the firſt of theſe three Heads, the argument is drawn out to a conſiderable length; but the principal Poſition of it ſeems comprized in the following Sentence †. "As on the one hand, the elements and other "inanimate parts of the creation carry on their "action without regard to the particular intereſt "and

† p. 8. Edit. of 1783.

"and ſituation of men; ſo men are entruſted to "their own judgment and diſcretion in the vari- "ous ſhocks of matter, and may employ every "faculty with which they are endowed, in order "to provide for their eaſe, happineſs, or preſer- "vation".

If we admit the truth of this Poſition, we would not be underſtood as ſubſcribing to the truth of every thing which is advanced in the Proof of it; but rather as allowing the Principle, in order to ſhew the fallacy of the Concluſion drawn from it. The paſſage quoted, is a general Aſſertion which muſt evidently imply many tacit Exceptions. All the Laws of Religion and Morality, are ſo many abridgments of man's liberty in the exerciſe of his judgment and diſcretion for his own happineſs. The queſtion remains intire, whether one of the Exceptions to the general Aſſertion be not a Prohibition of Suicide. Accordingly our Author, having drawn his Concluſion, in favour of Suicide, adds†, "In "order to deſtroy the evidence of this concluſion, "we muſt ſhew a reaſon why this particular "caſe is excepted".

Abundant Reaſon for the Exception has already been aſſigned, if the proof which we have given, of the Guilt of Suicide, be valid. An action ſhewn to be (in various reſpects) an infringement of the Laws of our Creator, cannot be

† p. 10. 11.

be one in which he has left us at liberty to exercise our Discretion. The general Assertion, therefore, which this Author has laboured to establish, is, at length, merely nugatory: since the particular Case for which alone it is adduced, appears to be one of the Exceptions from its Truth and Universality.

In the second place he examines, whether Suicide be † "a breach of our duty to our *neighbour* "and to *society*". He begins with saying; "A "man who retires from life does no harm to so- "ciety: He only ceases to do good; which, if it "is an injury, is of the lowest kind". On the contrary, we have mentioned ‡ several *positive* Injuries as the consequence of Suicide.

His argument proceeds upon this principle *; "All our obligations to do good to society seem "to imply something reciprocal:" and he asks, "when I withdraw myself altogether from society, "can I be bound any longer?" Here we detect a latent Fallacy. The Good which a person does to Society, and that which he receives in return, are not uniformly diffused throughout his life. At one time, in a helpless state, he receives benefits without conferring any; at another time, he confers much more than he receives. It may happen, that a person who wishes to quit the world stands deeply indebted, upon the whole, to Society. And this not only *may* happen, but is

† p. 18. ‡ Sect. II. of Part II. * p. 18.

is exceedingly *probable*, with the generality of thoſe perſons who lie under the uſual temptations to Suicide. Whether they are the victims of unavoidable misfortune, or ſuffer from their own diſſolute and vicious courſe of life, they have probably been for ſome time in a ſituation to receive rather than to beſtow. Or if, to avoid the *appearance* of ſuch a ſituation, they have anticipated their Reſources, their *real* ſituation is to be conſidered as having been equally neceſſitous. It would be a Principle very prejudicial to the Intereſts of Mankind, that every one ſhould be left to his own diſcretion to abandon life whenſoever he might judge himſelf to be no longer indebted to Society: — much more, that every one ſhould be at liberty to do it at his arbitrary pleaſure. The Conſequence might be, that a perſon would convert that ſeaſon of life in which he could principally be uſeful to Society, into a ſeaſon for receiving benefits from it; by making the age of Action an age of Eaſe and Enjoyment. This exchange effected, he would deſert Society; when of courſe he muſt be deeply its Debtor.

The Remainder of what is advanced under the ſecond Head, (which reſpects *Society*,) goes upon the arrogant preſumption which we have already noticed †; namely, that Man, ignorant and blind as he is, has ſuch a Knowledge of Cauſes and Effects, ſuch an Inſight into Futurity, as to be a com-

† p. 54, 55.

competent Judge not only of his preſent but alſo his future Capacities of doing Good.

Under the third Head, the Author of the Eſſay before us maintains that * "Suicide may often "be conſiſtent with intereſt and with our duty to "ourſelves." If what we have advanced, concerning the Folly or Imprudence of Suicide †, be juſt, no further Anſwer may ſeem requiſite. Yet we will make a remark upon this part of the Eſſay.

It is aſſerted; "I believe that no man ever "threw away life, while it was worth keeping. "For ſuch is our natural horror of death, that ſmall "motives will never be able to reconcile us to "it." We might as well aſſert, that we believe no man ever threw away his Riches, which are *always* thought worth keeping. And we might, with equal plauſibility, aſſign the Reaſon; ſuch is our horror of Poverty, that ſmall Motives will never be able to reconcile us to it. What then are the Motives of the Gameſter, whom no loſſes can reclaim from his favourite purſuit? What are the Motives of the luxurious and extravagant in a thouſand different ways? Are all theſe perſons influenced by great and weighty Motives? Do they act under a ſettled perſuaſion, that their temporary Enjoyments are cheaply purchaſed by throwing away all that they are poſſeſſed of, and reducing themſelves to Poverty? Nothing is further from the truth. Repeated victories gained by

* p. 20. † Part III.

by Paſſion and Appetite, give them ſuch force, that Reaſon, their natural Governor, loſes the habitual command of them; and thoſe inferiour parts of the conſtitution, wanton with exceſs of liberty, bear a man to his ruin, with his eyes open. If he throws away his Wealth, or throws away his Life, it is not, neceſſarily, becauſe his Judgment informs him that either of them is not worth keeping. He has not loſt his horror of Poverty, or of Death: but his nobler faculties have loſt their natural authority over thoſe which were placed in ſubjection to them; and he is impelled, in each caſe, by the latter, with a violence which the former, enfeebled and degraded by vice, are no longer able to control.

The Fallacy ſeems to conſiſt in this; that a Concluſion is drawn from the Mind taken in its *right* ſtate, in which every Faculty, Propenſity, and Averſion has its due proportion of ſtrength, and in which (it is agreed) the natural horror of death will ſecure a man from throwing away a life which is worth keeping; and this Concluſion is applied to a *depraved* ſtate of the Mind, in which it can by no means hold; when long Indulgence has given the Paſſions and Appetites an Authority to which they have no claim, — when the dictates of the Judgement are not obeyed, — when all is Anarchy and Confuſion. — If in this vitiated ſtate of the internal Conſtitution a man throws away his life, his doing ſo forms no proof

that

that he thought not his life worth keeping, much leſs that it *was* not worth keeping.

The Letter * which the great *Monteſquieu* has written, in the character of a Perſian reſident in Europe, has been anſwered by himſelf in the ſucceeding Letter. We have only to remark, that almoſt the whole ſubſtance of it is included in the above-mentioned Eſſay aſcribed to Mr. Hume.

The ſame Eſſay includes alſo in effect a great part of *Rouſſeau's* argumentation, introduced by him in a Letter of his Nouvelle Heloïſe †. And the arguments there uſed have received a refutation from Rouſſeau himſelf, in the Letter immediately ſubſequent. But ſince, in the former of theſe two Letters, the whole Queſtion is reduced to one fundamental Propoſition, this may deſerve a degree of attention from us. The words are ‡; "Plus j'y réfléchis, plus je trouve que la queſti-"on ſe réduit à cette propoſition fondamentale. "Chercher ſon bien et fuir ſon mal en ce qui n' "offenſe point autrui, c'eſt le droit de la nature". Which may be literally tranſlated thus; "The "more I reflect upon it, the more I find that the "queſtion reduces itſelf to this fundamental pro-"poſition. To ſeek one's own good and avoid "one's own harm in that which hurts not another, "is

* Lett. 76. of Lettres Perſanes.
† Lett. 1. of vol. 3. Edit. of 1764.
‡ p. 3.

"is the law of nature." — He who claims a right of Suicide, under an idea that it is not injurious to others, ought to make appear that the Effects of it which we have ſtated contain in them no Injury. He who ſeeks his own Good through the medium of ſuch Folly and Imprudence as Suicide has been charged with, purſues a courſe that can never bring him to the End at which he aims. Unleſs then we have failed in eſtabliſhing theſe principal points, the *fundamental propoſition* quoted is wholly inapplicable to Suicide; and conſequently the ſuperſtructure built upon it muſt fall to the ground.

The tedious volume written, in defence of Suicide, by the Swede, *Robeck*, (whoſe death in 1735 appears to have been the effect of Deſign,) is a ſtrong proof how little force of reaſoning is requiſite to ſatisfy a perſon in that to which his own Inclination leads him. This volume may be ſafely intruſted in the hands of the *unprejudiced* Reader: and, in thoſe of the *prejudiced* Reader, it is difficult to ſay what *can* be ſafely intruſted. Our time would be egregiouſly miſ-ſpent in giving an Anſwer to ſo wild, ſo diffuſe, and ſo weak a Defence of the fatal Practice which we are oppoſing.

What *Montaigne* has advanced upon the ſubject, ſeems in a great meaſure taken from Seneca

or

or other ancient Authors. He writes, in general, in the ſpirit of thoſe Authors, ſo far at leaſt as to *take for granted* that Suicide is not of itſelf and univerſally wrong. Of courſe he does not dwell much upon topics of Argumentation to *prove* the rectitude of it; but launches out into Panegyric on the Heroiſm of braving Death in various forms, or diſplays the Advantages of Death, as releaſing or ſecuring us from the Miſeries of this life; or he makes diſtinctions among the different caſes in which Suicide may occur, or relates accounts of remarkable Inſtances in which it has happened. To all this, what Anſwer can be given? The Heroiſm of braving Death is allowed on all hands, and deſerves the higheſt Panegyric; but this has nothing to do with the point in debate, whether it be right for a perſon to procure his own death. Suicide, like other crimes, admits a Variety of caſes, ſome implying more guilt, others leſs; and probably we ſhould blame *the moſt ſeverely* thoſe caſes in which Montaigne or ſome ancient Writers would allow a *degree* of blame: but this is intirely foreign to the general queſtion, Is Suicide lawful?

About the beginning of the laſt century, *Dr. Donne* wrote a treatiſe to prove, "that Self-homi-"cide is not ſo naturally Sinne, that it may never "be otherwiſe:" — a point which he labours very ſtrenuouſly and very copiouſly. But, after all, his argu-

argumentation amounts to little more than that it is praiſe-worthy to ſhew a contempt of Life, in the diſcharge of one's Duty, in the execution of noble and beneficent enterpriſes. Or, however, he ſo confounds this with direct Suicide, that it is not always eaſy to diſcover the End or Aim of his reaſoning, and perhaps leſs eaſy to perceive the Force of it. From ſome of his Expreſſions, and from the numerous Inſtances which he quotes, we might be led to conclude that he meant to juſtify Suicide as the Privilege of the unfortunate. On the other hand, he ſays expreſsly *, "I agree with St. Auguſtine here, that neither to "avoid occaſion of ſinne, nor for any other cauſe, "wherein my ſelfe am meerely or principally in-"tereſted, I may do this act." Upon the whole, the Deſign of the book, and the Execution of it, together, betray ſuch a Confuſion of ideas, that our time and attention would ſeem very ill employed in the examination of it.

Let us proceed to anſwer a few of the moſt ſpecious Objections, which are to be found diſperſed in the writings of various Authors.

One Objection is deduced from the Right of the civil Magiſtrate to inflict capital Puniſhments. This Right, it is ſaid, can be derived only from the Conſent of all the Individuals who compoſe a State: which Conſent can be of no force unleſs each

* P. 99.

each Individual has a Right to diſpoſe of his own life; ſince it is a Maxim, that no one can aſſign over to another a Right of which he himſelf is not poſſeſſed. Either Suicide is juſtifiable, or capital Puniſhments muſt be unjuſtifiable.

This is an artful Objection, to involve us in a difficulty foreign to our Subject. The only perplexity into which it could bring us, would be that of ſolving a queſtion with which we have no concern, Whence comes the right of the Magiſtrate to inflict capital puniſhments? A Queſtion, to which the Learned have given more ſolutions than one; nor does it appear neceſſary that ſome one, and no other, ſhould be ſatisfactory. We contend, no leſs than the Patrons of Suicide, that the Magiſtrate *has* a right of puniſhing with Death: but, becauſe we may happen to differ from them in the manner of *accounting* for that right, muſt it follow that an action, ſuch as we have ſhewn Suicide to be, always pernicious in its Tendency, commonly injurious in its manifeſt Conſequences; — muſt it follow that ſuch an action changes its nature, and becomes an innocent exertion of prudential foreſight?

Let thoſe who wiſh to ſee a ſolution of the curious and intereſting queſtion concerning the Right of puniſhing with Death, conſult the Writers who have treated the Origin of Government and the Nature of civil Authority. That Queſtion forms no part of our Inquiry. It reſpects the

the right of another perſon, to inflict death upon me as a *Puniſhment* and *againſt my will:* the preſent Subject relates to my own right, of making death a *Privilege* and flying to it *at my own pleaſure.* The Magiſtrate, if he acts by Commiſſion from the Individuals, acts by the joint Commiſſion of *all:* he who is the cauſe of his own death, acts upon the ſingle Authority of *one*; he defeats the intent of the Laws, and oppoſes himſelf to the authority of the Magiſtrate, in the ſame manner (with reſpect to the Public) as if he took away the life of ſome other Individual. The Queſtions are too widely diſtant, to be brought within the ſame view.

A ſecond Objection to our Theory, or Argument in favour of Suicide, is this. Life is a *Gift.* Therefore, when it ceaſes to make us happy, we can no longer be under obligation to keep it; when it makes us miſerable, we muſt be at liberty to reſign it. Such is the nature of all Gifts. If they are not worth acceptance, the refuſal of them cannot be blamed. If after acceptance they ceaſe to be worth keeping, the rejection of them muſt be permitted.

The Miſtake lies in conceiving that to be a *mere* Gift, which has a further idea annexed to it. The Life of Man is to be conceived as a ſtate of moral Diſcipline; in which he is placed, without his own conſent, by a Power which he is unable

to reſiſt, and by a Wiſdom whoſe Deſigns and Syſtems he cannot penetrate. It is to be conceived as a ſtate of preparation for one more perfect which is to ſucceed it. In reſpect of the preſent Enjoyment which it affords, it is indeed a Gift, and calls for our Gratitude. At the ſame time, in reſpect both of what we enjoy and what we ſuffer, in reſpect of every Opportunity of *Action*, it is to be conſidered as the Teſt of our Virtue, the Trial whoſe event muſt determine our future Condition; and, as ſuch, requires an attention of a very different nature from that which, as a mere Gift, abſtracted from every other conſideration, it could demand. Virtue may be put to the proof as effectually when Life is become a Burden, as while it is deſirable for its own ſake. Wherefore notwithſtanding it may become burdenſome, this cannot, either in Duty or Prudence, juſtify our laying it down.

Another Argument is founded upon the Right of migrating from one Country to another. It is ſaid, that every man has a Right to leave his native Country, and that, as he may leave *any one* Country, he may with equal reaſon leave *every one*: therefore he may leave the world.

The Right of Migration, though it were granted in its largeſt extent, could prove nothing more than that Suicide is conſiſtent with the Duty we owe to our Country. That which we owe to Mankind

kind remains in full force.—If I am left to chuſe my place of reſidence within any kingdom, there is no one Place in it which I may not quit; but it will not follow that I am at liberty to depart from the Kingdom. By parity of reaſoning, if I am indulged with the choice of all the Countries upon the earth, this cannot diſcharge me from my general obligations to Mankind.

There is but one more Argument or Objection which ſeems to deſerve our particular notice. It is alleged, that a Privilege of eſcaping by death from all Difficulties, is an Incentive to great and heroical Enterpriſes; from which men might be deterred by the proſpect of Torture, Captivity, or, in ſhort, any Calamity that ſhould wear a more terrifying aſpect than a ready and voluntary Death. Hannibal, the Carthaginian General, might perhaps never have ventured into the heart of Italy, where he gained ſuch victories over the enemies of his country, had he not been conſtantly provided with Poiſon againſt every emergency.

But is not the Privilege of Suicide an Incitement to *bad* as well as *good* actions, to enormous Crimes as well as extraordinary inſtances of real Heroiſm? When Criminals, under apprehenſion of an ignominious Death, Torture, or the waſting Miſery of a loathſome Dungeon, fly to Suicide; is it not obvious to conclude, that ſome

previous dependence upon this Resource has been one among the secret Springs of action, to instigate these Pests of Society?

Again: if this Privilege, or Refuge from Danger, be contended for, as an Aid to Heroism, it is implied that the Heroism which stands in need of it is inferiour to that which can support itself without such Aid. If Cato, Brutus, and others of the Romans, braved the dangers of War, upon a fixed resolution to die by their own hands rather than submit to a Conqueror, their Fortitude shines with a diminished lustre, when compared with that of Regulus, who, to keep his faith pledged to an Enemy, is said to have returned in the most voluntary manner into Captivity, where he expected severities more cruel than death. Considered in this view, the great and magnanimous exploits of the Ancients excite our applause and admiration less forcibly than similar atchievments of the Moderns; with whom it has been much less in practice to make a reserve of Suicide, as a Security from every Calamity worse than Death.

We have judged it proper to study Brevity in this *controversial* Part of the Dissertation; especially, because more copious Answers to the Objections stated would have led to a repetition of what had been laid down in the preceding Parts. Wherefore it is hoped that, if any of the Answers given

given ſhould appear deficient through their Brevity, reference will be made to the principal diſcuſſion of our Subject.

Were Controverſy our buſineſs, an extenſive field lies open ſtill before us: But we are willing to ſpare our Readers and ourſelves the irkſome taſk, of a ſerious attention to frivolous Arguments and impotent Declamation, in favour of a Practice which (while marked with the characters of *Guilt* and *Imprudence*) no Eloquence can render amiable, no Reaſoning can juſtify.

PART V.

The Prevention of Suicide.

THE crime of Suicide, when the act has taken its full effect, places the Criminal beyond the reach of human Laws. Notwithſtanding, it has been thought not altogether ſuperfluous to enact Laws for the Puniſhment or Prevention of this crime. If the Deſign of all human Puniſhments is to remedy certain Diſorders exiſting in the world, or, which is the ſame thing, to prevent the repetition of them, rather than to inflict miſery upon the Offender; why ſhould not this ſalutary End be aimed at, in Suicide, as well as other Crimes, provided the Accompliſhment of it do not appear impracticable? Call the thing a *Puniſhment*, or not, as you pleaſe: — if the *End* of Puniſhment can be obtained, what ſhould forbid the enacting of ſuch Laws as may ſecure it?

But the ſentiments of Compaſſion may ſeem to ſtand in the way. Is it not cruelty to involve the the innocent Family of a Criminal in the Puniſhment of his guilt? Is it not *more* cruel, to throw the *whole* Puniſhment upon the innocent, for no other reaſon than becauſe the guilty perſon has made his eſcape from it? On the other hand, are the ruling Powers of a State to remain inactive, when they

ſee

ſee the community loſing the Members which conſtitute its ſtrength? Are they to abſtain from all exertions for the public Good, becauſe a few private perſons muſt ſuffer by the means applied to remedy the Diſorder complained of? — It were greatly to be wiſhed that ſatisfactory Anſwers could be given to theſe Queſtions. We will offer a few thoughts in anſwer to them; the pertinence of which muſt of courſe be left to the judgement of others.

Let us firſt turn our attention to the caſe of the private Subject; who is diſappointed in his expected Patrimony, by the Confiſcation inflicted as a Puniſhment on the Suicide of his Parent. — You complain of a Hardſhip, in the Confiſcation of your Property for a crime committed by your Father; who, by the very commiſſion of it, has eſcaped from human juriſdiction, and left you the innocent Sufferer. Whether the Law which operates to this effect, be a wiſe and prudent Law, whether it be the beſt that could be contrived for preventing the Crime; — theſe are queſtions which may furniſh matter for your general ſpeculation, but, while you are intent upon the particular caſe in which you are ſo deeply intereſted, were much better ſuſpended. If you are deſirous of examining whether you can be ſaid to receive any *Injury* from ſuch a Law, we are ready to attend you in this inquiry.

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He who preſents you with a Gift, does you no Injury by with-holding any thing which was further in his power to beſtow, or by making larger Donations to others than to yourſelf. Now every thing that you poſſeſs, may be conceived as, in effect, the Gift of the Laws under which you live. Suppoſe all theſe Laws at once aboliſhed. From this inſtant, you have neither the Right nor the Power of excluding others from the Manſion which you have hitherto denominated *your own*, or the Lands which you have cultivated in confident expectation of reaping the fruits of them. All the eſtabliſhed Modes of transferring Property, loſe their force; nor do the Goods which were poſſeſſed by your Father belong to you any more than to a Stranger. Repreſent to yourſelf fully the nature of ſuch a ſituation: trace out in your conception the conſequences of being thus reduced to a ſtate of nature; where you are not only deſtitute for the preſent of the accommodations of life, but incapable of *acquiring* the permanent enjoyment of them. Though you ſhould maintain an idea of *Property* in a ſtate of nature, yet *Protection* is certainly vaniſhed. In vain would you plead, againſt the idle and improvident, a Right founded upon Labour: the firſt neceſſitous perſon (however idle or improvident) who might diſcover the Fruits of your Labour, would partake of them without ceremony, and you would find no appeal for Redreſs.

When

When you have ſufficiently impreſſed upon your mind ſuch conſiderations as theſe, return to the contemplation of civilized life, and aſk yourſelf whether you would not accept with thanks any portion whatſoever of Property, without thinking yourſelf injured in receiving no larger ſhare; nay, whether you would not rejoice in the mere Privilege of acquiring by your Labour what might be ſecured to you by the Authority of the ſtate.

The legiſlative Power has appointed, for the public good, that, in general, a Father ſhall be allowed to tranſmit his Property to his Children; but with ſome Exceptions, intended likewiſe for the public good, one of which is in the caſe of Suicide. Had your Father waited a natural death, conducting himſelf as a good member of Society, the Law would have given to you what it had given to him; that is, all that he poſſeſſed. But, now, it gives you only a *Part* of that Property:—(we ſpeak according to the *Engliſh* Law.) It takes nothing from you: therefore it does you no Injury. The Legiſlature is evidently under no obligation to pay a peculiar attention to *your* intereſt, above that of any other Individual; and it has made ſuch regulations as it has judged conducive, upon the whole, to the public good: therefore it has diſcharged its duty to you and to the reſt of the Society. The nature of human affairs is ſuch, that it is frequently impoſſible

poſſible to conſult the good of the Public without neglecting that of ſome Individual.

Your Father's ſituation, in reſpect of you, was very different from that of the Legiſlature. He was bound by an eſpecial tie, to make a proviſion for you. It is *he* therefore who has done you the *Injury*. We commiſerate you deeply, as ſuffering a heavy calamity, whilſt the only perſon againſt whom you have a right to complain, is one to whoſe memory you would more naturally pay the tribute of love, reverence, and eſteem; but we cannot, conſiſtently with equity, permit you to ſhift your accuſation, and to throw the blame upon the ſovereign Power of the State.

We come now to conſiderations which reſpect the public. The Crime under contemplation, it may be thought, does and muſt elude the Legiſlator's power: but the Prevalence of it cannot prove that the Means applied to prevent it are without effect. The ſame Argument would prove that the Puniſhments are ineffectual which are inflicted upon other crimes. But he who would render this Argument concluſive, muſt make it probable that there are as many Crimes actually committed, as there would have been if no Puniſhments had been inflicted.

In the firſt place, we will venture to affirm that Suicide is juſtly conſidered by the Legiſlator as *capable* of Puniſhment. No one will underſtand

the

the meaning of our aſſertion to be, that any human Puniſhment can be inflicted upon a perſon after his death: — its Meaning will become ſufficiently evident, whilſt we are endeavouring to eſtabliſh the Truth of it.

It is a Fact, that men are frequently influenced in their actions by Hopes and Fears of what may happen, after death, to their Memories, or to their Bodies, even in a world from which they will then have been removed. This appears ſtrongly in the anxious care with which ſome perſons give directions for the future diſpoſal of a lifeleſs corpſe. And there are probably but few, of whom it can be ſaid, that they are perfectly indifferent to the treatment which their Bodies may receive after death. The deſire of a ſurviving Fame, is very common with men whoſe eminence gives them any reaſonable ground to hope for it: nor is the Deſire, or the Hope, always confined to this deſcription of men. The Dread of a Stain upon the Memory, is perhaps univerſal. We ſhould reckon it a remarkable inſtance of Indifference or Inſenſibility, if we ſhould find a perſon, whoſe name had ſuffered by unjuſt ſuſpicious, neglecting an eaſy opportunity which was preſented to him, of clearing his character before he left the world. This dread of Infamy, intirely ſeparated from the Conſciouſneſs of deſerving it, has been known more powerful than the menaces or attacks of the moſt acknowledged Evils. Lucretia

cretia was not to be overcome by threats of Death; but ſurrendered to her brutal Lover, when he artfully ſuperadded a circumſtance of Infamy to his threats.

But all this, it may be ſaid, is mere Weakneſs and Abſurdity. Whence this concluſion? Is it, becauſe no *Reaſon* can be aſſigned for ſuch Hopes and Fears? But is not Man actuated by a variety of Principles whoſe operation is previous to all Reaſoning, or independent of it? This point, however, as not eſſential to our purpoſe, may be waved. Grant but the Fact (which is evident from experience) that men *are* thus influenced; and we leave the manner of ſolving it. Call it Weakneſs or natural Inſtinct, reaſonable or unreaſonable. The ſimple Fact is ſufficient for our Argument.

The Legiſlator, poſſeſſed of this Fact, conſiders how he may make it ſubſervient to the public Good. And it is obvious, from what has been ſaid, that he muſt find here a real and ſolid foundation for a Law to prevent or remedy Suicide†. He ſees that this Crime admits, if not Puniſhment ſtrictly and properly ſo called, yet ſomething which is equivalent to Puniſhment in reſpect of civil Society. He perceives himſelf armed with the ſame kind of influence, to deter a per-

† "Satis enim eſt id quod mortuis accidit à vivis me-"tui, ut hoc pacto à peccato retrahantur." Grot. de Jure B. et P. Lib. 2. Cap. 19. Par. 5.

perſon who meditates the crime of Suicide, as to deter one who is under temptation to commit Theft, Murder, or Treaſon; namely, the Denunciation of what is known, from experience, to be terrible to human nature. And the Puniſhment (whether properly ſo called or not) which is inflicted upon a Criminal of this peculiar ſpecies, has a tendency to reſtrain other perſons, which is produced in the very ſame manner as the like tendency in the puniſhment of other Crimes; namely, by exhibiting to public view a ſcene which gives a ſhock to the natural feelings of man, and which cauſes him to dread and abhor the Action of which it is the Conſequence.

We do not contend, that the Legiſlator's influence over the Crime of Suicide is equal, in *degree*, to that which he poſſeſſes reſpecting other Crimes; but that it is the ſame in *kind*, that it is real, and that it is founded on thoſe natural, or at leaſt univerſal, Feelings, upon whoſe perpetual Operation he may depend in the framing of Laws. Wherefore this Crime is juſtly conſidered, by *him*, as capable of Puniſhment.

We have omitted here the Confiſcation of Property; for reaſons which we ſhall now explain. No doubt, the natural Affection of a Parent may in ſome caſes have its effect, to reſtrain his hand from a Crime which muſt reduce his Family to Poverty. But this ſpecies of Puniſhment ſeems liable

liable to material Objections. We have ſhewn to the private Subjects of a State in which it is eſtabliſhed, that their duty is to acquieſce in it, and that no *Injury* is done to them by it. But, whether the Inſtitution of it be judicious in a Legiſlator, is a diſtinct conſideration.

This Puniſhment has a mixture of good and bad Conſequences. It is by no means a matter of Indifference to the Public, that a number of innocent Individuals ſhould be cut off from the enjoyment of that Property which they have had the utmoſt reaſon to expect, and with a view to which the Habits and Attainments of their Education have been regulated. Perſons educated to higher expectations, and ſuddenly depreſſed to an inferiour condition, at a time when their Qualifications were on the point of being brought out into the world, are loſt from the rank which they have quitted, render perhaps but feeble ſervice in that to which they are fallen; and, upon the whole, are much leſs capable of contributing to the public ſtock of Happineſs in the Community, than if they had kept their original ſituation.—Add to this, the Diſtreſs which falls upon the Individuals themſelves: and the whole Inconvenience or Miſery ſuffered, becomes an object of very ſerious attention to a Legiſlator.

In every Inſtance in which the good Conſequences of the Puniſhment fail, it is evidently pernicious. The queſtion is, whether the Inſtances

ſtances in which it produces the deſired effect, are ſufficient to overbalance the Miſchief of it, and recommend it as a general Rule or Law of Society. Now it would probably but ſeldom happen, that a perſon inſenſible to thoſe marks of Ignominy which are in the power of a Legiſlator to affix to Suicide, would be reſtrained by Tenderneſs of Affection towards a dependent Family, or a Delicacy of Honour in his attention to their Intereſts. Who are the perſons in whom this mixture of Delicacy and Inſenſibility can be expected? A few perhaps who, without a general depravation of ſentiment, have been led into an idea that Suicide is free from Guilt, and who have employed a counterfeit kind of Philoſophy, to baniſh the ordinary ſenſe of Shame reſpecting the Reputation which may ſurvive them. The number of pretended Philoſophers who correſpond to this deſcription, is, we may preſume, extremely ſmall. Therefore it is not only allowable, but requiſite, to neglect them, in framing a Law which is to be applied indifferently to every claſs of men: and all Confiſcation of Property ſeems juſtly excluded from the Puniſhment of Suicide.

An additional Argument is drawn from the experience of our own Country: where it is ſeen, that the perſons appointed to decide upon the Evidence of the Crime in particular Inſtances, will commonly evade the Law at all events, rather than inforce a Puniſhment which *appears to them*

ſo inequitable, — ſo ſevere upon the innocent. How culpable ſoever the Juries may be in their Evaſion of the Law, it is nevertheleſs a conſideration with a Legiſlator, that the Laws which he enacts be not only ſalutary *if* executed, but ſuch as are likely to *be* executed.

One queſtion yet remains: whether the Puniſhment ought to be univerſal; or to admit Exceptions, in favour of perſons who may be ſuppoſed incapable of whatever is criminal in Suicide.

That they who do not enjoy the uſe of their Reaſon ought to be conſidered as incapable of committing a Crime, is, ſubſtantially, a fair and equitable Maxim; but, if literally taken, is liable to abuſe. The Engliſh Law, which adopts the Maxim in general terms, expreſsly excludes one particular caſe; namely, when the Deprivation of Reaſon is cauſed by *Intoxication*. This temporary Phrenzy is held, not to excuſe, but rather to aggravate, every Crime which it occaſions. And what is the Difference between this Phrenzy, and any other which a man brings upon himſelf by his own Fault? None, certainly, which can render one more than the other an Excuſe for Crimes.

But does it appear that Phrenzy, Madneſs, or Lunacy, (for theſe terms are frequently taken as ſynonymous, in an extenſive ſignification,) can at any time be imputed to a perſon as his Fault? Perhaps this may not be equally *evident* in Lunacy,

nacy, or Madneſs commonly ſo called, as in the ſhortlived Madneſs of Intoxication: but there ſeems to be ſufficient ground for aſſerting a ſtrong Probability of it. Lunacy appears frequently to ariſe from a diſtempered ſtate of the Body: and what more common Cauſes can be aſſigned for the diſtempers of the Body, than Intemperance, Riot, and frequent Repetition of irregular and extravagant Paſſion? Lunacy, again, ſeems often to have its origin in calamitous events, Loſs of Property, Diſappointment of Hope. Are not theſe, in ſome inſtances, cauſed by our Vices or Indiſcretions? Are they not, when ſo cauſed, the moſt ſeverely felt? May it not happen, in other inſtances, that a Misfortune which would have been ſupported by a well-prepared mind, firm in the regular practice of virtue, and vigorous by the conſtant exerciſe of its faculties, will overwhelm an unprepared, corrupted, enervated mind, and dethrone the reigning powers of Reaſon and Judgment? The deſponding Melancholy which not uncommonly terminates in the deſperate act of Suicide, — is it not a natural conſequence of that indolent and torpid life, which ſhuns the efforts of Activity as a degrading ſervitude, which indulges every craving of Appetite, and prematurely exhauſts all the ſources of pleaſure, — which, in ſhort, reduces Man to the ſtate of an uſeleſs, not to ſay noxious, Reptile?

We have, therefore, a very probable theory,

that Lunacy may often be attributed to the Fault of the Lunatic himſelf. May we not go further? It has been accurately remarked by men of obſervation, that Lunacy is ſometimes a *partial* diſorder; that is to ſay, a perſon is lunatic in reſpect of ſome particular Objects, while in reſpect of others he retains the uſe of his mental powers *. Upon this idea, the proof of one or a few ſeparate actions implying an alienation of mind, will not amount to a proof that in the act of Suicide a perſon knew not what he was doing, or that he he did not retain all the faculties which conſtitute a moral Agent.

Nay, the very act of Suicide appears in a manner to imply ſome or all of thoſe faculties which diſtinguiſh a rational and accountable Being from inferiour Creatures. For it is notorious that Brutes do not deſtroy themſelves †. And, as far as we have been able to gain information, there is no inſtance of Suicide committed by *Idiots:* who, though Men in their external form, yet having never had, from their birth, the uſe of Reaſon, cannot with propriety be denominated rational.

But,

* The caſe of Mr. Simon Browne is remarkable to this purpoſe; mentioned by Dr. Hawkſworth, in the Adventurer, No. 88.

† This we may ſafely affirm, notwithſtanding the phænomena of Pelicans and Bees, by which Dr. Donne has attempted to eſtabliſh an Exception to the general poſition. See his Treatiſe on Self-homicide; p. 46.

But, after all, we fear not to meet the Objection which poſſibly ſome may perſiſt in maintaining againſt us, that it is cruel to inflict Puniſhment upon the Lunatic. For a moment's recollection will ſhew that this Cruelty cannot take place, upon the Principles which we have laid down. Theſe Principles exclude all Puniſhment of Suicide, except ſuch as may conſiſt in ſome peculiar treatment of the Body, or ſuch as may in ſome other manner expoſe the Memory of the deceaſed to a degree of Infamy. And theſe Puniſhments (that is, the previous Apprehenſion of them) cannot affect a perſon who is *totally* deprived of his Reaſon; nor, if the idea of *partial* Lunacy be admitted, can they affect any perſon otherwiſe than as he poſſeſſes a power of Reaſon to comprehend them. Therefore they cannot, in any caſe, be unjuſt or cruel.

Upon the whole, then, what we could wiſh to *recommend*, though by no means to *dictate*, is briefly this: that the Confiſcation of Property, as a Puniſhment of Suicide, ſhould be intirely aboliſhed *; that no regard ſhould be paid to Lunacy, but that, in all caſes, alike, ſome certain Mode of treating the Body of the deceaſed ſhould be

* This Puniſhment of Suicide has been aboliſhed in France. "L'on prononçoit autrefois la confiſcation de "biens; mais Mornac et l'annotateur de Loyſel remar- "quent, que ſuivant la nouvelle juriſprudence, cette peine "n'a plus lieu." Encyclopédie; voc. Suicide; ſub fin.

be invariably obſerved, and ſome certain Marks of Infamy affixed to his Memory. This *general* Idea is all that we ſhall preſume to offer.

We cannot conclude without a brief addreſs to the perſon who is in ſome degree diſſatisfied with his preſent life, but who with ſincerity wiſhes to prevent an unnatural Propenſity from acquiring that ſtrength which might one day render it fatal to him.

The Remedy which you have the wiſdom and the honeſty to inquire after while you retain ſtrength and inclination to apply it, may perhaps be comprized in the following particulars.

Acquaint yourſelf intimately with the Speculations that paint in its true colours the Crime which you are ſtudious to avoid. A *ſingle* Examination of the Nature and Conſequences of Suicide, may be ſufficient to convince your Reaſon: but this Conviction will not (it is to be feared) immediately create a ſettled Averſion, will not inſpire at once that Firmneſs of Reſolution which may in future be neceſſary to you. It is therefore the *Repetition* of theſe Reflexions, that we recommend; the dwelling upon them in your mind, and making them familiar. When the Circumſtances actually arrive, which will put you to the proof, it may be too late to *reaſon*; too late even to recal in an effectual manner the reaſoning which had once convinced you, but which had

had loſt its influence for want of repeated recollection.

But the moſt ſettled Abhorrence of the crime, founded on the cleareſt Conviction, will not authorize you in eſteeming yourſelf invincible. It will, therefore, be adviſeable, in the next place, that you ſhould decline every unneceſſary trial of your Firmneſs. For this purpoſe, you may exerciſe your Sagacity in looking forward to all the probable events of your ſituation in life; and employ your Prudence in ſteering a courſe, amidſt threatening Rocks and Sands, as remote from each as the ſurrounding terror of the reſt will admit. It is not a Valour of the nobleſt kind, that wantonly provokes Danger: nor muſt he who has involved himſelf in perilous circumſtances, be ſurpriſed to find his Fortitude diminiſhed by the reflexion, that he has been the raſh Cauſe of his own Difficulties.

Theſe two Directions may be in ſome Degree applicable to the generality of criminal and vicious actions; but are not equally ſo to all; and to none perhaps with the ſame propriety as to Suicide. When the Deſpair, the Melancholy, the furious Paſſions, the Extremities of Affliction, which are the uſual Cauſes of Suicide, have already taken poſſeſſion of the mind, you would in vain *begin* to prepare for ſo ſevere a trial: nor will the moſt early and deliberate Preparation be

a ſufficient Security, if you lay aſide all Caution, with reſpect to external circumſtances.

But confine not yourſelf to acting upon the Defenſive. You are furniſhed with Weapons to combat the unnatural Propenſity to Suicide. Suffer them not to lie unemployed. — To give them every advantage, endeavour to preſerve all your natural Powers in their moſt vigorous ſtate. Remember always the ſtrict though inexplicable Connexion between the Body and Mind; between the Diſorders of the one and thoſe of the other. This will be a motive to the practice of Temperance and all the other methods which are recommended for giving and preſerving due vigour to the bodily machine. It will alſo make you careful to watch and ſuppreſs every irregular motion of your mental Principles of action. The Mind and the Body require your attention, not merely each on account of itſelf, but alſo for the influence which each has upon the other.

Thus prepared, regulate your courſe of life in ſuch a manner that the active portions of your time may create a reliſh for thoſe which are more directly given up to Enjoyment, and that the portions allowed to Enjoyment may prepare you for a return to thoſe of Action. Place not the Action and the Enjoyment in ſuch oppoſition to each other, that the one may appear to be the Happineſs of your life, and the other its Miſery: but

but conſider them as forming, in harmony with each other, the higheſt degree of Happineſs which is permitted to Mortals in their preſent imperfect ſtate.

The Pleaſures which have a tendency to diſſipate and enervate, ſhould be uſed with a prudent reſerve; leſt they ſhould introduce an habitual Laſſitude and Depreſſion, which may degenerate into Melancholy. But there are other Pleaſures in which you may indulge more freely; taking with you, always, this caution, that we live not here in a continued ſcene of exalted Felicity, and therefore that the Expectation of it is a certain cauſe of Diſappointment. With Expectations thus moderated, you may diſcover in this world a fund ſufficient, at the leaſt, for producing all the Attachment to Life, which can be requiſite to the diſcharge of your Duty.

Above all, indulge your propenſities of the benevolent kind. It is impoſſible, indeed, that you ſhould be engaged without intermiſſion in conferring Benefits of the firſt magnitude: but there is a ſerene ſpirit of Benevolence, mixing itſelf with every action of ſocial intercourſe, which ſmooths the ruggedneſs perpetually raiſed by the claſhing of petty intereſts. Encourage in yourſelf this ſpirit: look upon a human Being, not as a Foe, but as a Friend. Give ſcope to your natural Affections: yet temper them with a mild diſcretion. Apply yourſelf, in the retired path of

domeſtic

domeſtic life, to alleviate the anxious Labours, to promote the innocent Enjoyments, of all around you. But when your good fortune preſents you with an opportunity of relieving deep Diſtreſs, of conferring a great and durable Benefit, ſeize it with avidity. The immediate Gratification will tranſport you beyond the bounds of ordinary pleaſure; and, which is more important, the future Retroſpect will cheer the diſconſolate hour of your Dejection, will heighten your Appetite for this natural Food of the humane and benevolent mind, and induce you to prolong your life while a ſingle Object remains, whoſe Miſery you can diminiſh, or whoſe Happineſs you can augment.

THE END.

MVSEVM BRITAN NICVM